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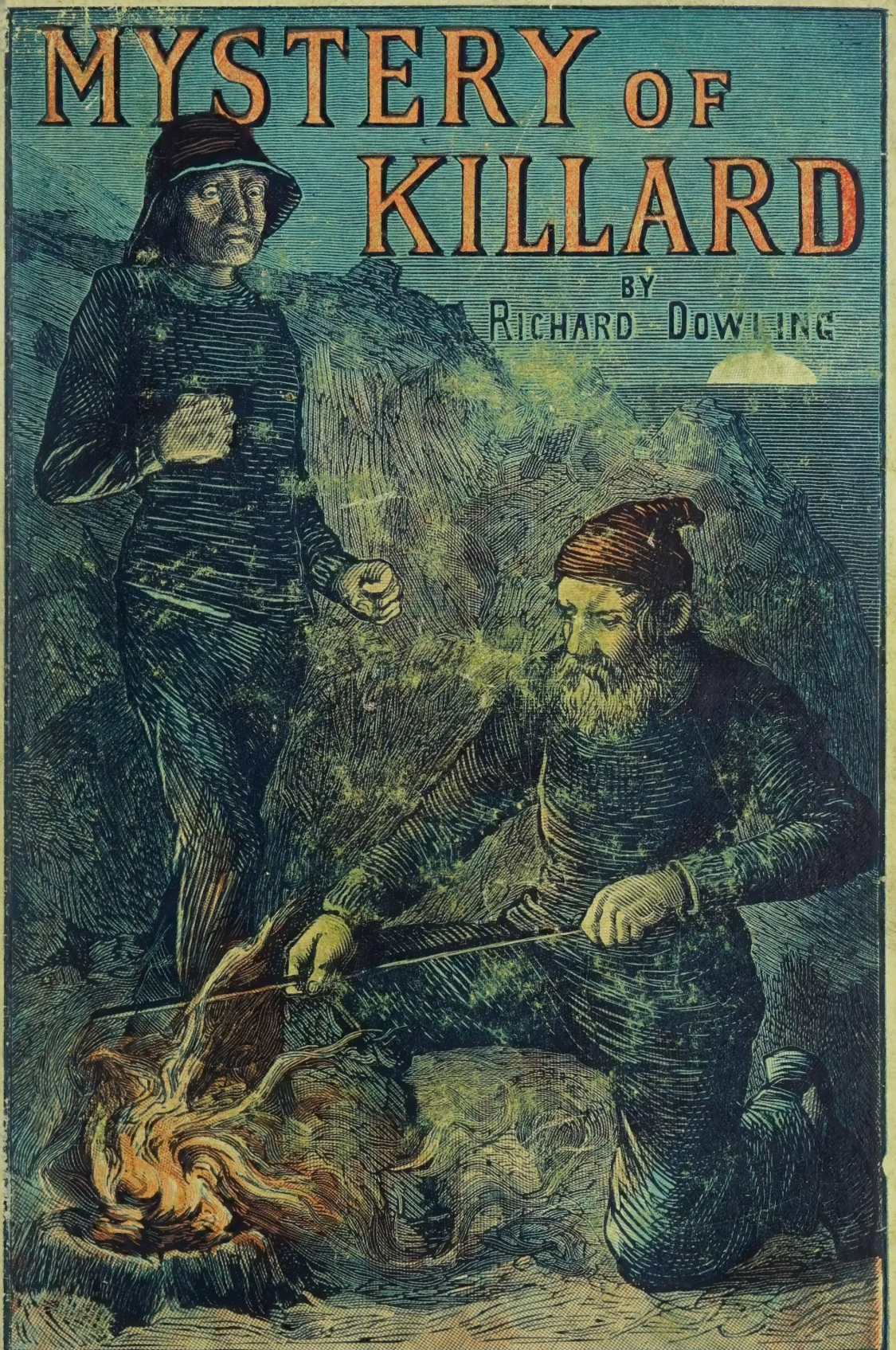
MYSTERY OF KILLARD

BY

RICHARD DOWLING



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Richard Dowling, a popular living novelist, is also the author of three volumes of essays. The scene is laid in County Clare, Ireland, and is supposed to have taken place in 1843.

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THE

MYSTERY OF KILLARD.

BY

RICHARD DOWLING,

AUTHOR OF

'THE WEIRD SISTERS,' 'UNDER ST. PAUL'S,' 'THE DUKE'S SWEETHEART,' ETC.

NEW EDITION.

London:

TINSLEY BROTHERS, 8, CATHERINE STREET, STRAND.

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THE MYSTERY OF KILLARD.

PART I.

THE RACE OF LANE.

CHAPTER I.

AN ARRIVAL AT KILLARD.

'WHAT a gale!' cried the man of the house, rising from the fire and placing a rush mat against the slit under the door. 'There hasn't been a worse gale this year. November is always bad, always bad. It's well they took my advice and didn't put out this morning. When I got up I noticed the fire-balls, and the streaks across the sun. Not a boat of them would see land again if they had gone. It's getting worse. God help all poor souls at sea this night.'

'Amen,' responded his wife, with a shudder.

The man of the house came back to the fire, sat down, and all was silent save the howling of the wind, and the thunderous tumult of the billows, pierced shrilly now and then by the shrieks of waves shattered into spray against the ramparts of the land.

The man of the house was low-sized, thick-set, grizzled, and about five-and-forty years of age. He had dark-grey blue eyes; his hair had been dark once; his body bent slightly towards the left side, and his face was dull in colour and blotched from fronting the rough airs, and meeting the rains of heaven and the salt breath of the winds. Beside him sat his only child, a daughter of fifteen, with pale, quiet face, light-blue eyes and flaxen hair. Opposite him sat his wife, large and broad, full-fronted, light-eyed, fair, with hair like her daughter's. The woman was knitting; the daughter's hands hung in her own lap, she leaned her head against the wall behind her, and kept her eyes fixed on the fire.

John Cantillon, the man of the house, bent over the fire smoking a short pipe. The words spoken by him had been uttered in Irish. He had referred to the boats of Killard, a small fishing village on the coast of the county Clare. He himself was a fisherman sailing out of the village on the skirt of which his house stood. He possessed a boat of his own, employed men to assist him, and was proprietor of the nets and tackle; had purchased them with his savings, and not with money borrowed at interest, as in the case of many of the fishermen of Killard.

The chamber in which the family sat discharged the joint duties of kitchen and dining-room. A door opened from it to the air. The floor was earthen, a large plate-rack, the top of which was covered with the cooking utensils, stood in a line with the door, two sea-chests covered with rush mats made seats for the huge open chimney, down which the wind bellowed, scattering now and then the glittering hail of golden sparks. From a hook, suspended by an iron rod to a cross-beam half way up the chimney, hung a large pot of potatoes over the fire.

Dried fish depended from the rafters; there were four deal chairs and a few three-legged stools. In the centre of the earthen floor stood a square deal table with stout legs. On a rack facing the door hung some broken fishing nets and tackle. In the corner lay a pile of cordage and sails, and standing up against the chimney-place were two long slender oars with narrow blades. The table was spread with jugs of milk, knives, mugs, and common blue Delft plates. Opposite the fireplace, and on each side of the plate-rack, was a door, each leading into a small sleeping-chamber. These doors were in a low partition-wall which did not reach to the rafters. Above this wall, and over the sleeping-rooms, yawned a large open space, from which projected boat-gear; among this gear the dull glare of the peat-fire formed fantastic shapes and made mysterious shadows.

'I think they're done,' said the man, pointing to the pot of potatoes. 'Let us have supper.'

The woman rose, lifted the pot off the hook, placed it on the ground, and having thrown a coarse canvas cloth over the steaming water, raised her head awhile, listening to the wind, then looked around, listened again, and shuddered.

Observing her motions, the man of the house stood up, and seizing the pothooks, said:

'It's too wild for you to face the wind, Bridget. I'll take them out and strain them.'

Meanwhile the girl had left her place, and was busy arranging the things on the table. Just as the man turned with the pot held in the pothooks at arm's length before him, a loud knocking sounded at the door. The women uttered exclamations. Cantillon placed the pot on the floor and opened the door.

For an instant the rush of wind deafened all, but it caused the fire to flare up, and showed a tall, broad, lank young man standing hatless against the dark background of the night. He bowed, and made a gesture requesting leave to enter. The master of the house bowed too, and motioned him to come in. He crossed the threshold; in an instant the door once more closed, and it became possible to hear.

'God save all here,' saluted the stranger.

'God save you kindly, man,' returned Cantillon, looking suspiciously at the unknown face and the powerful frame. There was a wild expression on the countenance, and the breath of the intruder came short.

'God keep the house, and all that's in it, from hurt or harm,' he continued, gazing around with relief. Now that the wild look yielded a little, Cantillon felt less suspicious.

'Thank you kindly. You're welcome to the house. Take a seat by the fire. You have come a long journey?'

With a heavy sigh the traveller threw himself on one of the chests in the chimney-corner, and wiped his forehead with a large blue pocket-handkerchief spotted with circles of white.

'Ay,' he answered, 'I have come a long way to-day; forty miles on foot, with little to eat, and I've run the last two miles along the cliffs. It's a mercy I didn't go over. They are awful cliffs, full of sudden danger. I steered by the spray. If there had been no spray I should have been gulls' meat by this, for I could not but run.' He wiped his forehead once more and shuddered.

'But, good man,' demanded Cantillon, from whom all uneasiness had departed by this time, 'what drove you to run two miles in the heel of your heavy day?'

'Something I saw,' half whispered the other.

'Something you saw! What was it?'

'They told me of *it* at Cunnager, eight miles south, and that the cliffs were the shortest way, and by them I travelled. It was a bad evening, and when night fell mercy left the elements. The sea was cloud and the clouds were sea, and the land a mist; and as I came I saw by an island—for there was a young moon struggling for man in the heavens—I saw in the spray and mist over the waters, by that island, something that stopped my heart and made me wonder if the coast was real or beyond the world. I saw——'

'We know,' murmured the fisherman, laying his hand kindly on the other's. 'You saw the Spirit of Tears; she is often seen hereabouts. But she is a good spirit, this Spirit of Tears.'

'The Spirit of Tears,' whispered the two women, drawing closer together. 'There must have been a wreck near the Bishop's Island in this storm. Heaven between us all and harm!'

'Amen,' responded the man devoutly.

'Amen,' whispered the others. Then Cantillon, turning to the stranger, 'You must be fainting for something to eat. Wife, give him milk and bread while I strain the potatoes. When he gets some supper, he'll be for a dance, I warrant.'

It was towards the close of November in the year 1843 that the stranger arrived at the house of John Cantillon, in the village of Killard, county Clare.

CHAPTER II.

TOM THE FOOL'S NEWS.

WHEN supper was over and the table cleared, the four retired to the large chimney-place. This was a kind of interior chamber, open on one side, closed in by the gable of the house at the back, and by two thin walls forming the lower portion of the vast flue. At a height of about five feet from the floor a crossbeam connected the two sides of the flue, and on this beam rested a brick partition, reaching to the roof; this made the fourth side of the chimney.

More turf having been heaped on the hearth and the ashes drawn away, the four people assumed easy attitudes. Cantillon sat outside on the same chest as the stranger. Mrs. Cantillon opposite to him, and opposite the young man was Mary, the daughter.

The food and rest and warmth had considerably restored the stranger.

In the dull light his countenance looked thoughtful, almost sad. He was over six feet in height, and had the appearance of great strength, notwithstanding his want of bulk. The two men smoked their pipes.

Mrs. Cantillon knitted; Mary sat leaning her head against the corner, with her hands clasped in her lap.

'No doubt you're wondering what drove me here?'

'It isn't for us to ask questions. We have bit and sup for those who come, and good welcome, and no questions,' answered Cantillon, with hospitable warmth and still more hospitable humility.

'Well, I'll tell you, anyway. I had a brother named Bill—Bill Martin——'

'Bill Martin!' cried the three, rousing up and looking at the speaker with much interest.

'Yes, Bill Martin. He came to these parts four years ago, and was drowned in the spring of this year, he and three others. As he did well here, and the fishing on the east-coast is bad, I started for Killard across the country, and when I saw the village I rapped at the first house there was a light in; for I knew that although I was a stranger, and far away from home, the door would be opened, the fire brightened, with a hundred thousand welcomes; for if I've travelled miles, they were all Irish ones, and, though they tell me the Irish ones are longer than the English, there's always a warm welcome for the stranger at the end of Irish miles, and that shortens the road.'

Cantillon had risen; and when the young man ceased to speak, caught him by the hand and shook him heartily.

'I'm proud to see you. Poor Bill fished in one of my boats, and a carefuller or better hand I never had. But that March gale; none of us knew 'twas coming. Poor souls!—poor souls! Poor Bill! Sit down, young man, sit down; although times aren't here now what they once were, we'll find an oar for you in one of my boats, never fear. Why, I loved poor Bill as if he was my son!'

The woman had drawn near Martin; the arm of the man of the house rested on the stranger's shoulder.

Suddenly the door flew open, a wild gust of wind dashed through the room, the women shrieked, the elder dropped on her knees; she thought the spirit of the living man's brother had come to greet him. In an instant the door was closed and bolted by a man who had

entered; at the same time his voice was heard crying huskily:

'There, that will keep you out, you bullying vixen! You won't get at me through that, you cowardly beast! you she-imp of that black witch!'

His tones were fierce and frantic. Turning and seeing the woman on her knees, he moderated his manner.

'Get up! Get up, and don't be a fool. Can't you see it's only me, Tom the Fool, and not my she-wolf of a grandmother? Why is my own flesh and blood always showing the whipcord of the hail where to bite? Why is that she-wolf of a grandmother always setting the fires of the wind at my ears and neck? Why is that villainous hag always spitting in my face? Don't be a fool; it's only Tom the Fool. But I'll be even with my traitor of a grandmother. I'll do what I used to do when she was here; I'll put snuff in her tea. I'll put snuff in her tea, I will, Mrs. Cantillon, as sure as my name is Tom the Fool!'

He uttered this speech in a thick guttural tone, rising to a scream when his vindictiveness predominated, sinking to almost an inarticulate gabble when he spoke to the woman. In the meantime the latter had risen.

'I come with the tobacco for the man of the house; real Limerick twist, full of juice, and as lasting as Carrigeen moss, only greasier. Smell it. A smell of it would wake a corpse, if he could only be persuaded to draw one breath through his nose. Here's the stockings and stay-laces for the women of the house, and the shawl for the white girl, and here's—— Stop! here's the cure for the soldier, but that's not for this house, but for the widow O'Brien—I mean her pigs—between them and all harm.'

From the folds of an ill-fitting oil-coat he produced the articles as he spoke, and handed each to the person for whom it was intended. Tom was the light messenger of the little colony by the sea, and made frequent visits to the small town of Clonmore to purchase articles which the one shop of Killard could not supply. In winter, when the carts went seldom inland with fish, Tom remained almost the only link connecting Killard with the larger world.

As soon as he had delivered all, he sat down on a stool in front of the fire and remained mute. His hands were, however, busy; for drawing one sod of turf out of the fire, he isolated it from the rest, and with the bellows commenced blowing violently at it.

'Any news from Clonmore, Tom?' demanded Cantillon.

Tom took no heed, but went on more vigorously at his blowing.

The fisherman repeated his question.

Tom's whole faculties were directed to the hissing turf. At length he spoke, in a tone of soliloquy:

'That's the way the she-wolf blew on the Bishop's. That's the way the she-wolf blew on the Bishop's. That way! that way! that way! until she blew him away —blew him away! Blew him into Killard—blew him into Killard! Blew the dummy into Killard; and he's there now, like his father before him, looking for a wife.'

Here he flung down the bellows with a loud bang that made all start.

'The dummy looking for a wife in Killard?' cried Mrs. Cantillon and her husband in a breath.

'Yes; and it must be a dummy wife, too—like his father's; and, faith, the women of Killard aren't much

good for dummies, as the men know. So they haven't one that is dumb, or that would act dumbness for half an hour, if you gave her all the red gurnet in the sea; so he's going inland in the morning to seek farther and fare worse.'

CHAPTER III.

A TITLE DEED.

When Tom the Fool had gone, the four people in the fisherman's cottage sat in the same order as before. There was much to talk over—the man's dead brother, the fishing on both the eastern and western coasts, the tackle employed, the kinds, qualities, and value of the fish caught, the winds and currents, and the different sorts of boats used. On the east coast they fished in wooden boats and yawls; on the west they had currachs of wicker, or slight lath frames, covered with tarred canvas. All this conversation passed between the two men. In a while the subject could yield no more matter for conversation, the traveller was worn out, and volunteered nothing. After a long silence the woman looked at her husband, and said:

'"Twasn't for nothing the Spirit of Tears was at the Bishop's to-night. It must have been because that heathen, David Lane, has left it to find a wife like his mother, instead of staying where he is by himself, and letting his bad name and race die out.'

'Hush!' returned the fisherman; 'it isn't for us to judge. He may be better in the sight of heaven than any one in Killard parish, big as it is. He doesn't do harm to anyone on that lonely island, and who'd grudge

him his few hand-lines from the rocks? Not I! If I get my bread out of the sea, it isn't I fill the sea with fish, and everyone is free to come and take.'

This impartial speech of the man was uttered in a low voice, between whiffs of his pipe; but towards the end of it there was a twinkle in his blue-grey eye, as though he were talking for a purpose. His object appeared in the tone and purport of his wife's retort.

'As good as any of us! Well, I like that! It's yourself all out to say so. My idea is that anyone who could say such a thing is no better than David Lane himself—not, young man, that the heathen has any right to a Christian name, for he never put his feet inside the chapel in all his days, and the blessed water never touched his head, and it's a wonder his head doesn't take fire, the black-hearted unbeliever.'

'That's it,' said the husband, in slow approval; 'that's it. You see, Bridget, you yourself don't think me more than a bad likeness of him in the way of my talk (though for the matter of that he can't be half so bad, for he doesn't speak an ill word of anyone, and never did), and unless you think there's no one worse than I in the parish, I am, according to your own account, so very near him in badness that you ought to keep your tongue off him, out of respect to his cousin-german in wickedness, that's your husband.'

He concealed a smile with his horny hand, and winked solemnly through the firelight at his daughter, who smiled back to him, and clapped her hands softly as they lay in her lap. Edward Martin saw the wink and the smile. She had not smiled before. He was very tired, but he shook himself up a little, and paid more attention to what was going on.

'Don't mind a word he says, young man,' cried the woman excitedly; 'he's just as hard on him as anyone else; he's only joking. It's no joking matter, though.'

The husband cleared his throat humbly.

'I know,' he replied, keeping his eye fixed on his daughter, 'I know I'm not soft on him, *like some of us*, because he's a landed gentleman, and owns the Bishop's Island. There's many a girl in the parish would be glad to leave her own people and go there to be lord and master of a whole island, and it isn't clear to me if *some of us* were widows to-morrow, that we wouldn't jump at David Lane, dumb as he is.'

He winked again in the same slow, solemn fashion at his daughter, and she smiled appreciation of his humour.

'There's for you! there's for you!' cried the wife in exasperation, letting her knitting fall into her lap, and folding her arms. 'I don't mind his making little of me and my taste; but it ill becomes him to say to my face that I think so meanly of my husband as to put the thought of him and that Lane into one day, let alone anything like a regard for David Lane. It's too bad, after my years of love and anxiety, and my nights of prayers and dread while he was out in the gales. It's too bad!'

Her tone had fallen to one of tearful reproach. The slow, grey eyes of her husband came back to her face, and rested on it tenderly and somewhat proudly. He removed the pipe from his lips, and coughed slightly.

'Whist!' said he; 'whist, Biddy!

She withdrew her glance from the face of Edward Martin, and for a little while the husband and wife gazed into one another's eyes. His look was a disclaimer of what he had uttered, and an acknowledgment for all her

love. Gradually her face lost its look of reproach, and instead showed penitence for not having seen his joke, and behind the penitence confidence and love.

When the eyes had done their work, as if by instinct each looked down. Then the man said in his ordinary way :

'Bridget, tell the traveller about this David Lane, and I won't put it in my last will and testament that you're to marry him, if so be he is a widower. Tell the traveller ; 'twill pass away the time.'

The master of the house drew the turf together on the hearth, and refilled his pipe ; the girl unclasped her hands, and placing one against the wall, rested her head on it. The young man leaned forward, with one hand on his knee.

Outside, the gale still raged and the waters bellowed. Now and then drops of rain hissed in the fire ; but notwithstanding exterior tumult, the listening attitudes of all, and the expression of mysterious interest on the countenance of the young man, made the place seem hushed. The fisherman's wife began her tale :

'The Bishop's Island is little more than an acre of land. There is nothing on it but a low stone hut. It is only two boats' lengths from the shore, and there is no way of getting to it from a boat. Well, long before I was born, this Lane's father used to live in this hut, without paying any rent to the old Lord Clonmore, who owns all hereabouts. The father often came down to the village, and only that he never darkened the door of the chapel, there was nothing against him. You may think that was as bad as it could be, but wait until you hear about what he did later on.

'One winter's day old Lane—he was rising sixty then

—gave out that he wanted a wife. Considering the place he lived in, and the smallness of his means (for he made only little by the hand-lines, and plaiting rush-mats wouldn't keep a curlew), everyone in the village was astonished at his boldness; and, take my word, there was fun to find out who old Lane would get his first refusal from; all said it would be Ellen Keogh, as she was old and bedridden, and they said that if he married her he needn't take her to the Bishop's, as she'd never run away from him—anyone else, after one month, would be very likely to give him the chance of injuring his health by eating all his earnings. But he turned the laugh against the village by saying there was nothing in it that would suit him. So he put a stick over his shoulder, and went inland.

'In a month he was back again with his wife. As you may think, all the village went into old Pat Casey's (his son Pat now has the place) on one excuse or another, when they heard of the bride being there. I myself went and saw her. She was a tall, thin, pale-faced, sickly-looking poor creature, who seemed as though she never knew a wholesome day, and had got the Call, and was making ready to go on her long Journey. She had very bright, quick eyes. I noticed them most of all.

'My poor mother spoke to her; the bride smiled, made signs, and shook her head. "He may have got a wife to suit him," thought I; "but she is as ill-mannered in company as a sow at meals." Just then in came her husband, and he said, "Don't take offence, neighbours, at her not speaking to you; she can't—she's a dummy."

'With those words he made signs to her, and she got up, and the bride and bridegroom went out in the wind and rain, and walked across the downs to the Bishop's,

he keeping in front to shelter her from the weather. Where he got her no one knew, and why he married a dumb wife no living man or woman ever since found out; but after this people shunned him, and there were queer stories told about the Island, and fires were seen on it, and voices were heard, and the Spirit of Tears often came there, as you saw her to-night; and the neighbours said that he sold himself into Darkness, and had dealings with the Evil One.

'In course of time, he brought his wife back to the village, hired old Pat Casey's back-room, and there a son was born to him, and there the young mother, after kissing her baby, put her hand on her poor deaf ears as though she heard at last, though no one had spoken in the room. It was the Call, and she smiled, and then she died.

'I remember the day well. It was a Monday. I take my token of it by the coming back on the Sunday before of Andy Blake from the wars in Spain, where he lost his right arm. He said he put his sword and his arm into one of the enemy, and broke off the arm in the wound to poison the foeman; but he was always talking queerly.

'No one in the village cared to have the child (though it was well-grown and hearty), because of the noises and the sights about the Bishop's; so, after a little time, the man Lane carried the child inland and left it, he said, with his wife's people.

'For four years nothing particular happened. Then one day, while my mother was buying candles at old Pat Casey's, a man in a shawl came in and asked where Lane lived. The man carried a rosy-cheeked boy, gathered in under the shawl on his back. The stranger was footsore and tired, so old Pat Casey sent some one to call Lane.

My mother waited with an excuse of expecting my father to come there for her on his way to the boats.

'When Lane arrived and saw the boy, he took him in his arms and kissed him. Then, setting him on the floor, he lifted the tin scoop out of the scales, and threw it with all his might on the ground behind where the child stood. The men jumped and my mother screamed. Lane had his eyes fixed on the boy, who never moved nor even winked his lids, but stared around. As soon as the father saw this, he fell on his knees in the middle of the shop, and cried out :

'"*Thank God he cannot hear!*"

'It was a mercy the father wasn't struck dead who thanked Heaven for a blight he himself had helped to bring into the world by marrying that dumb creature. It is one thing to submit to the will of Heaven, and another thing to be glad because Heaven afflicts others.

'Well, the father took his son with him to the Bishop's, and there the two lived until the child was grown up into a young man; then when old Lane was over eighty he died. All the time there was no love lost between the people on the Island and the people of the village. All the neighbours, except Tom the Fool, who has no sense, turned their faces against old Lane, and they thought little better of the son, for they looked on him as a guilty monster, the offspring of a heathen and the property of Darkness, owing to his having been born to a prayer that was a curse.

'When the old man was gone, the neighbours got together and planned how they should get the son David Lane out of the parish, so they sent for Billy Cahill, a bailiff of Lord Clonmore's, and put the case, and told how the people of the Bishop's paid no rent, and were

under the protection of Darkness. They brought the bailiff with them, and he went to the Island and made signs to young Lane, and young Lane crossed by a rope, and Tom the Fool put into signs (he was often with the dumb man and knew his ways) that Lane should go. Lane went back to his cabin. When he returned from it he had a paper in his breast, and what do you think it was? A deed under Lord Clonmore's own hand, telling how his lordship had sold to old Lane the Bishop's Island for thirty pounds, and how it was his and his heirs' for nine hundred and ninety-nine years. Though the Island is little more than an acre, the bailiff told us, with a laugh, how old Lane had taken care to have put down in black and white that all the hawking, hunting, fishing, mines, wood, water, and foreshore rights were to be his and his heirs' for ever.

'You may take my word there was talk about this in Killard. Old Lane must have been scraping and pinching all his life to get the thirty pounds together, unless he got it all in one sum when he was making the bargain with Darkness.

'The young Lane, who is now over thirty, continued on the Island as his father before him, and now, as you heard Tom the Fool say, he has come down to the village to find a wife, but is going inland because we have no one afflicted like himself. It's enough to bring the Anger down on the whole parish, and I only hope he'll never come back to these parts.'

Here the woman ended. For a long time the traveller had been able to keep awake with the greatest difficulty. The moment her voice ceased, his head drooped heavily forward, and, worn out by fatigue and overcome by the heat of the fire, he fell asleep.

He roused up in a little while, and asked where he could rest for the night. Cantillon had no room for him, unless he would sleep in the chimney-corner. The young man rose and said good-night, having previously been told to go to Casey's, where he could be housed more comfortably, 'and where,' added Mrs. Cantillon, 'you will see David Lane, of the Bishop's Island, who is on his travels for a wife.'

CHAPTER IV.

A LAST APPEAL.

FOLLOWING instructions he had received from Cantillon, Martin found Pat Casey's house. Indeed, if he had been told no more than that such a place existed, he could not well miss it; for not only was it the solitary shop in the village of Killard, but, although nine o'clock had not yet arrived, there was light in no other house of the village: all the inhabitants, with the exception of those at Casey's, had gone to bed. The house itself was open unusually late, partly because it harboured a guest, and principally because Father Murtagh, the parish priest of Killard, had sent word that he should call to see the guest.

Martin explained to the owner of the place, a plump, red-faced man, what he wanted, and added, that he had sought his house on the advice and with the recommendation of Cantillon.

'I don't know that I can treat you as well as I'd like to treat any friend of John Cantillon's; for, you see, we

have only one room, and David Lane has taken it, and there's only one truckle bed in it,' returned the owner of the house.

'But,' struck in a tall woman, his wife, 'the traveller has nowhere else to go to, and we must only try to do our best for him. We can give him a few bundles of straw and a couple of rush mats and a pair of blankets, and make a shake-down for him in the shop, if Lane objects to sharing the back room with him.'

'I am much beholden to you,' said Martin; 'anywhere will do, so long as there is shelter; often I have slept on the cliffs, but this is no night for that.'

'Go into the back room,' said Casey, 'you'll find a fire there. We'll do our best for you, and welcome. Go in and sit down and rest yourself until we make up something for you to sleep on. You'll find Tom the Fool and Lane of the Island there.'

'It's the room Lane was born in,' added the woman, as she snuffed a large tallow dip candle that flared and flickered on the counter.

When Edward Martin entered the back room he found Tom crouched on the floor, his face to the fire. In front of the fire, with his hands behind his back, stood the man of whom he had heard so much that evening.

The draught admitted through the open door caused the deaf mute to look round. His eyes ran quickly over the traveller, and, failing to recognise him, he placed his hand on Tom's shoulder and interrogated him with a sign. While doing so he did not remove his glance from the stranger, and Tom had to stand up and step into the line of Lane's eyes before he could reply. His answer was that Martin had come a long way, and was a friend. To the latter part, expressed by Tom taking one of his own

hands in the other and shaking it, the mute dissented emphatically.

With the usual salutations, which were answered by Tom, Martin drew a chair towards the fire and sat down. The Fool subsided into his old attitude; Lane retired a step from where he had stood, and kept his eyes still fixed on the new arrival. The expression of his face was one of almost hatred. Dislike and distrust were fully unmasked, and behind them lurked something like dread mingled with rage. But those who knew the man would not have been surprised at this, for he treated every stranger as an enemy. This peculiarity of his tended in no little way to increase his unpopularity, for the people of Killard were of a friendly, sociable character, and, as far as their means went, loved to exercise the virtue of hospitality.

Martin was too tired to take an interest in the undisguised ill-will of the mute. He rested his arm on the back of his chair, and having leant his head on it, was almost asleep, when the door opened again, and Father Murtagh, the parish priest of Killard, stepped quietly into the room.

Father Murtagh stood a moment facing the light of the candle and fire. His face was a dull brownish-yellow, his cheeks sunken and furrowed, his figure emaciated almost to a skeleton, and in his eyes an expression not easy to analyse. In those dark eyes shrank weary trouble, anxious awe, tremulous self-distrust, profound self-questioning. He looked like a man who had undertaken some tremendous task, and, after entering upon it, found himself either unequal to it or fearful of his fitness for it. Taking the fact that he was a minister, and connecting this with the question of his own worthiness written upon

his face, it seemed as though he stood in the presence of the great Sacrifice, terrified rather than consoled by the reflection that he was heir to overwhelming responsibilities imposed by it on man.

For a while he surveyed in silence the group before him. Then he addressed the Fool: 'Tom, is what I hear about this unhappy man true? Is it a fact that he is going to take a wife, afflicted like himself, and that he intends doing so without making his submission to Heaven and repenting his past heathen life—without even receiving baptism?'

The voice was low and quavering from sheer want of physical strength.

The Fool rose and bowed respectfully as he answered, 'I'm not to blame, your reverence; I did my best.'

Accepting the implication as an answer, the priest clasped his hands and raised his eyes in unquiet awe towards Heaven, as though he prayed for the other's acquittal, and pleaded in fierce grief his own utter impotence.

David Lane drew away from the priest as far as the room would allow, and stood scowling dangerously at him.

'I cannot speak to him,' thought the priest in anguish, 'and signs cannot now be made to answer. If I could only gain some time!'

The mute stood still, glaring resentfully at the priest. The latter looked again to Tom for help. 'Can nothing be done?' he cried aloud. 'Can nothing be done? Can we not, Tom, by any means, make this wretched man pause? Tom, ask him, in Heaven's name, to wait—to wait, if it were only one month.'

Tom took a long time to convey the idea to Lane. At length a half-angry, half-suspicious light shone in the

mute's eyes, and folding his arms tightly across his chest, he shook his head with fierce resolution, and looked an exasperated negative at the clergyman.

'What is to be done? What is to be done?' cried Father Murtagh, glancing in unspeakable anguish from Martin to the Fool. 'I have left no stone unturned to draw this man into the holy fold. I have importuned daily and nightly that the ice around his heart might be thawed, and grace prevail. I have implored and entreated him. I have lost no opportunity, consistent with my other duties, to try to win him from his outrageous indifference. This responsibility is almost too great for my strength; not that I murmur because it is placed upon me, but I feel a dead weight upon my soul. I feel the full responsibility of his salvation resting, as it were, on my own, and I can do nothing—nothing! I am manacled and powerless. Oh! if he were only included under any banner of the great Church, I should be at rest. But to think that this man is as though the waters of the Jordan had never flowed—as though Calvary had never been!'

His head dropped on his chest, and for a while he stood in a reverie of despair. After a little time he raised his face suddenly towards Heaven, his lips moved rapidly, his countenance was illumined with passionate earnestness, and from his eyes there came the light of complete faith. He looked as though he were within the visible eye of God, and was clamouring for a miracle. For a minute he remained thus, then, lowering his head suddenly, he crossed the room with a firm, confident step to where the mute was standing, and falling before him on his knees, held aloft in one hand a crucifix, and with the other pointed to Heaven. As he knelt there was a

tyranny of entreaty in his face, as if denial were not to be possible.

Lane started at his approach, threw his body into a half-defensive attitude, with his right hand hanging clenched by his side, and his left clenched upon his breast. When the priest fell on his knees and held the crucifix aloft, Lane hissed and muttered through his white set teeth, and, with a growl, placed his back against the wall and flung up both his hands, holding them behind as far as they could go against the wall.

Martin looked on in surprise and fear, but Tom took little interest in the scene. 'I did my best,' he muttered to himself, as the priest and the mute held their arms aloft. 'I did my best, your reverence.'

The deaf mute glanced hastily towards the door, slid quickly from the space between the priest and the wall, snatched up his hat off the table, and dashed out of the room, out through the shop, and out into the night, gibbering and shaking his arms to warn off all who would stay him.

Father Murtagh remained motionless for a moment, then his arms faltered and fell, his head drooped forward on his chest, and with a groan he sank to the ground, his strength exhausted by the wrestle between his duty and fate.

CHAPTER V.

A CHRISTIAN HEIR.

At a time when the popular faith of Ireland was under severe ban, and suffered persecution, a bishop of the Roman Church, driven from his diocese in the midland, sought security in Clare, and subsequently was obliged to retire to a place of utter obscurity; thus he came to a small island, on which he built a hut. Here he dwelt for many years, his pursuers believing him dead, or fled beyond the seas into France. But his life was not one of idleness; he soon made his name well-known among the rude fishermen of the coast, and drew them around him, ministering to them, and affording them medical aid, for he was learned in the healing art as practised at that time. He lived to extreme old age, and after his death the island was regarded almost as sacred by the people who knew his history, and in memory of the exile to whom it had afforded a shelter, they called it the Bishop's Island, which name it retains to this day.

The coast of Clare is bold, barren, and desolate in the neighbourhood of Killard. Nothing but heroic cliffs could withstand the unimpeded fury of the Atlantic. For miles inland there is no vegetation on the land but unprofitable moss-like grass. No tree, or shrub, or plant rises to break the dull monotony of plain. The coast line is ragged, and torn into huge chasms by the sea. At Killard the cliffs rise two hundred and fifty feet sheer out of the water. The village is built around a little bay, whose waters are secured against the violence of the exterior billows by a low chain of rocks running across

the mouth of the bay, and having two narrow openings through which boats may pass.

Although the rocks and cliffs now fronting the sea are extremely hard and durable, there must have been soft fissures in them ages ago, for the whole coast is pierced with caves, and cloven into abrupt chasms. These caves vary in kind and form. Some are mere shafts reaching to no considerable distance. Others vast and intricate labyrinths, with suites of chambers, into whose gloomy depths the murmur of the wildest storm never penetrates, whose black mysterious waters are never stirred by a ripple from the ocean. Frequently the roofs reach to prodigious heights, and looking upward, it is impossible to believe the cliffs can afford roofs for such unexplorable vaults of darkness. In many cases the caverns ate through the solid rock until the roofs fell in, leaving a network of dangerous fissures exposed. This last phenomenon has given birth to a number of small pillar-like islands, which rise from the sudden depths of the sea, and have summits level with the surrounding cliffs. Of such origin is the Bishop's Island.

It is almost flat. The inner semi-circular edge roughly corresponds to a little semi-circular bay in which the island stands. The outer edge is more broken, and has a deep depression in the middle. The inner wall is perpendicular, the outer abrupt and precipitous. On the latter, about twenty feet above highwater-mark, there is a narrow ledge. By means of a cleft in the face it is possible to descend from the level of the island to this ledge, but the path is extremely steep and dangerous.

In the depression on the outer side stands the low stone hut built by the bishop. Owing to the hollow in which it lies, no one can see it from the shore.

The construction of the hut is peculiar. It is formed of large stones, cemented together with a light, grey mortar, such as may be found in the ecclesiastical buildings of two hundred years ago. The walls are thick and unplastered on either the outer or inner side. The roof, formed of huge flags, has grown green with moss, and, supposing it were possible to see it from the shore, it could not readily be distinguished from the green velvet cap of the island. The interior of the hut is divided into two chambers, each about twelve feet square, and having no door of communication from one to the other. Thus it is necessary to walk round one side of the hut in passing from room to room. In the partition wall, which, like the exterior ones, is very thick, is a deep fireplace for each room. The two chimneys are connected into one flue, carried in a curved line to the cope of the roof, from which the smoke escapes into the air without the aid of a chimney-pot.

Unlike his father, David Lane did not pass through Killard on his return from the inland. The villagers never could ascertain the time exactly at which he once more reached the Island, but towards the middle of January in the new year, Tom the Fool came one day running to a group of fishermen, who stood on the wet strand of the little bay of Killard. As soon as he was within speaking distance, he threw up his hands and shouted as well as his distressed breathing would allow him: 'He's there! he's there again, he and she!'

'Who?' demanded one of the fishermen.

When Tom happened to be greatly excited he invariably employed pronouns for nouns, as though he fancied other people should see as clearly as he the images before his imagination.

'Lane, David Lane, David Lane, the dummy of the Bishop's Island, and his wife, a dummy too.'

It was another peculiarity of Tom's, that when once he found people did not understand whom he meant by 'he' or 'she,' he became unnecessarily explicit, his accents at the same time rising, and his eyes glowing through their vacuous dulness in a kind of wild protest against the stupidity of those around.

'What is she like, Tom?' demanded another of the fishermen, as he shifted his pipe from one side of his mouth to the other, and lazily stooped to raise a cork float off the net at his feet.

'Well made and likely, with a yellow skin and white teeth, and red in her cheeks, and the sound of her dumb voice, and the hearing of her deaf ears, in the fire of her brown eyes.'

'Faith, Tom!' cried the fisherman who had last spoken, as he straightened his body and winked at his comrades; 'but I think 'tis jealous of you David Lane would be if he *heard* you say those words.'

For a moment the unshapely frame of the Fool shook with rage; then words rushed from him so quickly one upon the heels of the other, that it was difficult to follow him.

'How dare you say that! how dare you say that! You! Do you hear? David Lane is my friend, and his wife's good name is my friend, let who will gainsay me and suffer. And the Bishop's Island is my friend, and all the fish that come to his lines are my friends, and the airs above the Bishop's Island are my friends. All—all! all friends. And often, when my she-wolf of a grandmother threshes the island with the thousand flails of the wind, and scoops up the water in her skinny

hands and tries to dash the water over the island and wash away my friend, I lie upon the cliffs with my chin over the sea, and laugh to hear that old she-wolf yell in the storm as the waters fall down again and leave the island and my friend safe. Ah, you villainous old hag!' he shook his fists at the dull, grey mists beyond the bar, 'I'll meet you for all this yet; I'll be even with you for what you do for me and my friends. I'll hand the faggots to burn up your wrinkled wickedness.'

He was foaming at the mouth, and his dull, pale face had grown white with rage. The vacant eyes were perplexed with heat, but no fire came. Like the white vapour hanging over the place where a fire has been extinguished with water, the opaque heat was smoke from the ashes of reason extinguished for ever.

The fishermen were somewhat startled and awed by this outburst, and they considered it prudent to pursue the jesting no further.

From that time forward the slightest approach to this subject roused Tom into fury, transcending even that occasioned by his persecution at the hands of that 'old she-wolf' of his disordered imagination.

When Pat Casey heard that the bridal party had reached the Island, he turned to his wife and said, 'That's a change in old Lane's plan. I hope there will be another change, too, and that we shan't let our back-room to him who was born in it.'

The spring and summer months of that year passed away without any remarkable event in the village of Killard. No one ever crossed from shore to the Island except Tom the Fool, and Lane's wife had never been down to the village. Hence, beyond what Tom told, there was little known of her. Tom was reticent, and

seemed to see in any question, however guarded, an attempt to repeat the old insinuation. True, some fishermen reported that once, from a distance, they had seen a woman's figure on the low ledge of the Island, but the distance had been too great to allow of any particulars being gathered. It would be possible for anyone on the cliffs near the Island to see a person on the level ground above the hut, and during the time David Lane had been seen there more than once; but people seldom went along the barren cliffs. The road which led from Killard to Clonmore, the town in which the village sold its fish, went from the centre of the latter at right angles to the coast-line of the bay.

In the meantime, Edward Martin had been taken into the employment of Cantillon, and now fished in one of the latter's boats. The young man lived at the end of the village furthest from Cantillon's house, that is to say, at the other side of the little bay. He had made a most favourable impression on his master. The elder man saw in him a resolute spirit and a good heart.

Mrs. Cantillon, too, had taken a liking to him, partly because of his gentle, sad manners, and partly because she felt he had been sent to them as a kind of substitute for his dead brother. This latter thought caused her to behave towards him more like a mother than a master's wife. Often in the evening, when the boats had been hauled in on the strand and the oars carried away, and the fish sent up to Casey's, from which place the cart for town started, the young man found his way to his employer's house, and sitting in the wide chimney-corner, or upon the bench facing the sea at the back of the house, the family and he talked over such little news as their monotonous lives afforded, or as reached them,

wonderfully transformed, from the great outward world of Clonmore.

It may be that as the winter slipped into the spring, and the spring into summer, there gradually grew upon the young man a feeling of interest in the quiet, subdued, light-haired daughter of Cantillon. He looked upon her as a child, but in his quiet nature there lay, out of his own knowledge, a certain crouched sentiment, which, when time had drawn the child into girlhood, might awake and rouse up and teach him to regard her with different eyes.

The year's fishing had been successful. Mrs. Cantillon said Edward Martin had brought them luck, at all events matters had gone so well that towards the end of September the fisherman made up his mind to build an additional currach for the next year. So he set out for the city of Limerick, to purchase nets and gear and canvas. He was gone a whole week.

Upon his return, after embracing his wife and daughter, and settling himself comfortably in the chimney-place, and answering some questions concerning the wonderful sights afforded by the wonderful city, the eagerness to know died out much sooner in his wife than he had anticipated, and before he had well broken into his magazine of astounding facts disclosed to his eyes and ears in his travels.

'There's nothing the matter, Biddy?' he asked, looking in surprise from daughter to wife. 'Nothing amiss with you here, or anyone down at the village? Tell me.'

'Oh, no! there's nothing wrong; at least, nothing wrong that anyone is to blame for, barring those who have to say to it, and they're outside sorrow.'

'What is it? Come, tell me! Don't be making me

wander all over misfortune to try what would frighten me most.' He turned to his daughter, 'What is it, Mary?'

'It isn't a fit thing for the child to talk about, if she can't help hearing such scandals.'

'Whe-e-ew!' he whistled. 'I'm sorry, whoever she is.'

'It's no she, but a he,' explained the woman, in acrimonious mystery—the acrimony being for the offender, the mystery for her husband.

'A man! Who is he, and what has he done?'

'No man, but a child, and he hasn't done anything, as yet.'

'Upon my conscience, Biddy, but you're saying a lot and telling me but little. Why don't you speak out at once? A boy that hasn't done any wrong, but is going to in his own good time! I feel like a blind horse at the bottom of a stone quarry, with no neighbour near to ask the way out.'

The family were sitting in the huge chimney-place, the daughter beside her father, the mother opposite to him.

'There was one good thing done anyway,' continued the woman, looking calmly into the fire as though she were communing with herself.

'All right, Bridget,' said Cantillon, rising; 'I'm going down to Pat Casey's to hear the news, and when I come back I'll tell you all about it.'

Casey's discharged the duty of circulating library to Killard. The freshest news of the village was always to be found there, duly elaborated and edited.

At the man's threat, Mrs. Cantillon turned towards him, and said, 'You haven't had a blast of the pipe since you came in, John. Mary, get your father his tobacco, and I'll bring my knitting.'

The husband understood what this meant, smiled quietly at his daughter, and dropped, with an expression of relief and resignation, to his seat.

When the needle had been set to work and the blue tobacco-smoke rose slowly into the capacious flue, Mrs. Cantillon began :

'The evening after you started for Limerick, who should come down to Casey's but David Lane, Tom the Fool, and David Lane's wife ; and, to make a long story short, he hired the back-room for a fortnight, and paid Pat Casey's wife ten shillings down on the spot.

'When I heard of this, I took a basket in my hand and went down for some turf. David Lane was out at the time, but I found his wife in the back-room. She isn't a bit like his mother, but healthy-looking and well favoured and strong.

'As you may understand, there were few words between her and me ; but she looked friendly, and glad to see me. No wonder ! She hasn't seen the face of living woman for nearly a year. Do all I might, I couldn't help pitying the poor afflicted creature. It is no blame to her, I dare say, to be dumb ; and as to her marrying David Lane, maybe she had no choice, but was forced into it by her people to get rid of her. I took her hand and smoothed her hair, which is very brown and bright. She smiled. She was sitting on a chair near the window, looking into the back-yard.

'While I was keeping her company, in comes Lane, looking very cross at me, and carrying a large stick, with a heavy nob on the end of it. The couple made signs to one another, and then he seemed to be aware of his bad manners and unreasonableness, for he came over and caught my hand and squeezed it, and then put his wife's

in mine. I am free to confess that I felt a kind of leaning towards them then, taking into account what was going to happen; and bad as things were, worse wouldn't better them, as the saying goes.

'Well, after a while I left, and as I was coming out whom should I meet but Kitty Heffernan. She said to me, "He," meaning David Lane, "sent Tom the Fool to me, and I'm to stay a fortnight. You know, Mrs. Cantillon, it isn't for one like me to say No. I daren't but come out of regard to the unborn, not to think of anything else."

'Well, to make a long story short——'

'Faith!' broke in her husband, 'I don't see much sign of the shortness. I'd bet a penny on you against any woman in the parish to give a story its natural dimensions, and put Kitty Heffernan herself to it; and I know what she can do at a yarn since our Mary was sent to us, bless the day!'

He put his arm affectionately round his daughter and drew her to him, and kissed her fresh young cheek.

Mrs. Cantillon took no heed of the interruption, but went on:

'Two days after—that was Friday last—Mrs. Casey sent up for me, and I went down. David Lane could hardly be kept out of the room; it was as much as Tom could do to make him stay in the shop. Nelly Casey said it would be no more than a duty for some one from the village to be with the poor creature, so I went in.

'"Now," said Kitty Heffernan, the minute I was in the room, "bolt the door, Mrs. Cantillon, and draw the dresser across it."

'I did as I was bid, wondering the whole time what could be the meaning of all this——'

'That's just my disease at present,' interrupted the husband. 'I'm wondering what all this is about.'

She coughed in half-protesting recognition of his intrusion upon her narrative, and went on:

'As soon as the door was bolted, and the dresser drawn across it, I walked over to the window looking into the back-yard, and who should I see standing in the yard, watching the window, but Edward Martin. He was just in front of the stable-door, and every now and then he turned round from the window and spoke to some one in the stable. I could not see who this person was. When Edward Martin saw me at the window, he smiled and nodded his head and pointed to the stable, as much as to say, "It's all right;" but what he was driving at or intending to mean I hadn't the ghost of a glimmer.'

'My disease all over again, only I'm getting to know less and less the more you say,' the husband muttered, with a low laugh.

'I cannot make or mar what was, and I'm telling you as it fell out. Be easy. Well, to make a long story short——'

'You will have your joke, Biddy; far be it from me to gainsay you. But go on, anyway, either making a long story short, or a short story long. What brought Edward Martin into Pat Casey's back-yard is where I'm blackest lost.'

'You're to hear shortly.'

'Amen!'

'In about two hours (Edward Martin standing in the same place all the time, and talking, now and then, over his shoulder) there were four instead of three living beings in the room. Kitty Heffernan said to me, after a time, "Wrap up the child in that flannel there, and hand him through the window to young Martin, outside.'

'I was struck all of a heap with surprise, and, moreover, I feared something wrong might be intended. "What for?" I asked, and I knew my thoughts were on my face, plain to see.

'"Don't ask me now, dear, I'm not to say. I'll tell you before you leave this room, but not at present. You're not afraid Edward Martin would have a hand in any wickedness? What's going to be done is all for the best, and no harm will come to the child."

'Thinking over everything, and remembering that Kitty Heffernan was a good and heartful woman, and would injure no one, and that Edward Martin would stand idle if goodness wasn't wanting his arms, not to speak of his doing evil, I made up my mind, wrapped the new-born infant in the flannel and handed him through the window to Edward Martin, without opening my lips.

'The young man took the child as tenderly as a woman might, and carried him across the yard into the stable.

'Kitty stood by the bedside of the mother, and I remained at the open window. I was going to put it down, but Kitty said, "Don't." That's all was spoken in the room, and I left the window up.

'In a few minutes, Edward Martin came out of the stable, carrying the new-born as tenderly as a woman might. Just as he handed me the child through the window, I saw Father Murtagh leave the stable and cross the yard. He was very pale, and trembled all over; but his face was more quiet, and his eyes more satisfied than I have seen them for many a long day. As he went round the corner of the house he lifted his two clasped hands to Heaven, and his face was full of

thankfulness. Father Murtagh passed out of my sight as I took the child from the arms of Edward Martin.

'I came back and laid the new-born by the side of the mother.

'"Now," said Kitty Heffernan, "you may go. Let David Lane know he has a son; but you are not to let Tom the Fool hear that Father Murtagh has baptized him in the stable, yonder." And that's the story of the heir to the Bishop's Island.'

'Well, I'm glad it is a Christian heir this time,' responded the husband. 'Maybe, good will come of this. But there is nothing in the story Mary might not know of.'

'It's my belief that no good will come of this boy,' said the wife.

'Is he deaf?'

'I don't know, but he can't talk.'

'Small blame to him for that as yet, although the family has great savings of talk for them somewhere.'

'And other savings, too. I saw three gold pounds with Lane.'

'Faith! if the new-born boy comes in for all the savings of the talk and gold he'll be a wonderfully rich man and a speech-maker.'

'There now,' said his wife, 'leave off, and don't be joking about such people.'

'I'm not joking at all. I'm wondering; that's no sin.'

CHAPTER VI.

THE TWO GENTLEMEN OF CLONMORE.

In the year 1854, that is to say a decade after events recorded in the last chapter, there lived in a dingy, unwholesome street near the old cathedral of Limerick, an elderly man described as a 'gentleman,' for he did not work at any trade or profession. If he had been asked to furnish a reason why he should not fall out of the world's economy, he would have replied that he was a philosopher. Among the poor and uneducated people surrounding him he passed for a miracle of learning; for there was no event or circumstance or fact latent or passing, that he could not clothe in half-a-dozen names, not one of which conveyed a more definite idea to his hearers than that the speaker was a very learned man and ought to be in the Church, or the law-courts, or Parliament, according to the subject he treated of. He was tall, erect, thin, with dull white complexion and small round restless eyes.

He lived in a large bleak upper back room; across its threshold none of those who knew him ever passed.

As far as his neighbours could learn, he had no friends nearer than those with whom the supplying of his slight daily wants, or chance meeting, brought him into contact. And yet no man was less independent of society. He would converse freely and fully with any man, woman, or child fortune threw in his way. He was the most simple and guileless of men, and although he considered the whole circle of science and art lay revealed to him, he assumed no airs beyond one of bland, impartial, imperturbable infallibility. When mention of any branch

of thought, or inquiry, or discovery unknown to him by name arose in his presence, he declared it to be either an ignoble superstition, a vulgar invention, or an idle and fruitless divergence of the school-men from the broad and open paths of knowledge.

Of each one of the score of languages spoken of now and then by ordinary people he knew some facts, such as the number of letters employed, its supposed origin, its manner of declining participles or conjugating verbs, or, perhaps, he could quote a few words; and with this he seemed, in his own mind, to have a master-key whereby he, next month, purposed entering thoroughly into all its intricacies and delicacies, expounding all riddles hitherto unsolved.

Often, when pressed by some stray student or schoolboy for a translation of an obscure passage in a book at a stall, he would pause to deliver a lecture on the language itself or the author, or the style of binding employed in the early Venetian books as contrasted with the mean arts and florid styles in vogue to-day.

When his monologue was completed, he would hasten away at the beckoning of some profound science whose existence depended on his fostering care. In his own bare room there were no books. Had he not in his head a library perfect and always at hand wheresoever he went?—and mere printed books were simply symbolic idols of the spiritual faith of knowledge within his brain.

This gentle philosopher had, early in life, devoted himself vaguely to learning; but, as the years went on, his mind had not developed proportionately to the guests he had so studiously invited, and things had come to a dead-lock. His name was James Heywood, and he upheld his right to the title of gentleman by reason of

property yielding forty pounds a year, in the town of Clonmore. This property consisted of four small houses in a street off the Square.

In 1854, Mr. James Heywood resolved to leave the city and live in the town, for one of his houses had fallen idle; no new tenant could be procured; the town was declining fast. If he resided in the house now vacant, he should save rent and be the better able to take care of his estate, besides avoiding the expense of an agent. Therefore, in July of the year he came to Clonmore, and entered into occupation of the unlet house.

However the learned might have been disposed to regard Mr. Heywood's claim to the title of philosopher, no one could dispute it to that of gentleman. He was kindly and loquacious to all, and, perhaps, his philosophy had helped him to see equality throughout the whole human race, or some faculty of his nature bound him to look on mankind as his brethren; at all events he had but one set of manners.

Whether the abstractions over which his life had been spent had weakened or effaced all perception of social distinction is a question hard to settle; but there was to be observed in him no apprehension of caste. Moreover, so simple and unobservant was he of objective matters that moral turpitude lay either outside his system and was unappreciated, or he had grown to regard the faults of mankind as matters for which he could not be held responsible, and over which he had received no commission to sit as judge. If fate had cast him in the company of felons, he would have spoken and behaved as though they were clergymen in orders. If he and a Kaffir who had abjured cannibalism were the sole inhabitants of a Pacific island, he would have taught the Kaffir English,

and as soon as his fellow islander knew twenty words of the dialect he would have addressed him on abstruse physics and metaphysics.

At the time James Heywood, gentleman, came to reside at Clonmore there was in the town another man who, as far as the qualification of doing nothing for his daily bread constitutes a gentleman, was a gentleman; but beyond this qualification he possessed no other claim to be so described. His name was Christopher Cahill. His father had been a bailiff of the late Lord Clonmore. Years ago the father had died; but although the office had been hereditary in the Cahill family for generations, young Christopher had not been appointed. In the public mind there was no well-defined indictment against young Cahill. He had never done anything to bring himself under severe censure.

In appearance he was thick-set, muscular, and heavy. His face was a dull brick-red, and his hair jet-black. It was hard to remember the colour of his eyes, for they were rarely straight before an observer for a second; they were not so much restless as distracted. When he met any one he knew, though he would freely and gladly talk, still the interview seemed to disturb the business of the eyes, and they were instantly directed to the ground or a distant object on a line with themselves. In the year 1854, young Cahill, as he was generally called, appeared about seven and twenty years of age.

Over a little river flowing by the town of Clonmore stretched a high stone bridge of five arches. The parapets were low and broad, and in the fine summer evenings many people walked to and fro on the bridge, enjoying the fresh airs flowing with the stream, and the prospect of the green level plain stretching east and

west below the road. Young and old men sat on the parapet and smoked and chatted, or leaned lazily over to watch the salmon and trout shooting in the green-blue waters beneath. To a gentleman living on his private fortune and devoting himself largely to philosophy and conversation, a more delicious haunt could scarcely be found than this New Bridge, as it was called; so Mr. James Heywood had not spent a whole week in Clonmore before he looked forward to his few hours of evening discourse on the New Bridge as the most useful of his day.

One night, early in August, Mr. Heywood stood alone on the bridge. It was close to midnight; all the other loungers had gone back into the town, but he still lingered in hope of finding some one going in the direction of his home. He leaned his elbows on the parapet and gazed into the dim waters murmuring below. Presently footsteps arose upon the silence, and in a little while he turned and saw the figure of a man approaching from the end of the bridge opposite the town. As the man drew near Mr. Heywood rose and said, 'Good night!'

'Oh, Mr. Heywood! is that you? I did not know you in the dark. What a beautiful night it is!' responded the other deferentially.

'And I did not recognise you, Mr. Cahill, until you spoke. I am glad to meet you. We are both going the same way and can walk home together.'

'I'm only too proud, sir,' returned Cahill, in a tone of humble self-congratulation at the pleasure and honour in store for him.

'I was observing the water,' continued the philosopher, pointing to the vague depths of air and river, 'and

thinking what a wonderful thing it is. Of old it was considered to be an element, but recent scientific research has proved it to consist of two gases.'

'Oh!' mildly interpolated his hearer, as though he had never held water in very high esteem, and after learning of its former deceitfulness was now prepared to hear with pleasure anything to its further disadvantage.

'There are, Mr. Cahill, most singular things stated in the books about water. Extreme cold, as you know, converts it into ice; extreme heat into steam. Burning mountains, or volcanoes as the learned call them, throw up large masses of cold water, and cold ground expels hot. Its effect on the human frame is marvellous, whether in external or internal application; and it is capable of influencing to a wonderful degree the human mind.'

'No?' inquired Cahill, with anxious curiosity. They were now walking in the direction of Clonmore. At the mention of the effect of water on the human frame and mind, the younger man had started into eager attention. His steps became slower and slower, and the eyes which rarely dealt with a companion now rested half-wonderingly, half fearfully, on the old man. 'And do you tell me,' he asked the philosopher, after a long ramble of the latter's into the history of water, 'that it has anything to do with the mind?'

'Oh dear, yes!' promptly replied the other. 'Men have been healed of madness by sea voyages; driven mad by looking continually at large plains of liquiform oxygen and hydrogen—the two elementary gases which compose the well-known fluid. A man in whose dungeon, beneath the moat of an ancient castle, there fell drops of water, which sounded like "trick-track," went mad

because they would not, even once in months, fall like "track-trick," proving the deadly power of iambic feet on the intellect of human beings. Those who read iambics continually are mostly of feeble intellect; those who continually write them, mad. After iambics the mind requires trochees, or it's all over with sanity. Then there was another man driven mad by having a single drop of water let fall on his head at regular intervals.'

'What a wonderful thing book-learning is, to be sure! And tell me, sir, for you know everything——'

'Oh dear, no! Only the foundation of knowledge—not everything. No one can know everything.' There was more repudiation in the words than in the tone.

'Did you, sir,' Christopher Cahill was becoming abjectly humble as his interest increased, 'in all your reading, ever meet with an account of water turning people that could talk into dummies, or making them wish to have dumb children?'

'Science cannot deal with anything that is not; and no metaphysician with whose works I am familiar—in fact, I may say no metaphysician at all—has ever yet investigated the problem circumscribed by the mental or physical condition of children, say, seven years before they are born. Let me warn you against the schoolmen in this important inquiry. They are likely to have a theory on the subject, but neither they nor their theories are to be trusted in the slightest degree. All they have to say on any subject is a mass of disintegrated froth.'

'And is there nothing about it anywhere?'

'Yes, in the poets. In the epic, but not in the didactic or pastoral poets, we frequently meet with people who are said to be—mind, *said* to be—struck

dumb by the sight of the ocean; but then, you know, it is only a figure of speech to say so.'

'Don't it seem a queer figure of speech to strike a man dumb?' asked Cahill, in a reverential puzzle.

'No doubt. But then you can never in the slightest degree rely on the poets, especially the epic poets. Poetry makes what may never have been seem to be; science—well, science, when it meets religion, often makes some people believe that what never was has been. Let me make it plain to you. All poetry would be uninterrupted iambics; all science would be uninterrupted trochees, and either, recurring incessantly, would drive men mad. You must have both; to make it still simpler to you, religion must put in the stops. Now do you understand?'

'Better than if I was bred and born in Trinity College, and never took a meal out of doors,' returned Cahill ruefully. It had been unannotated Greek to him.

'I'm glad I have been of service to you.'

'Mr. Heywood, could you tell the difference between a man who is mad and a man who is a dummy?'

'Unquestionably. A man who is a deaf mute (which is an expression preferable to the one you have employed) utters inarticulate sounds; a man who is mad utters inconsequential words. I hope that sets your mind at rest?'

'It's as much at rest as the mind of a sleeping infant, responded Cahill still more ruefully. It was Chaldee this time.

They had now reached Mr. Heywood's door. They bade one another good night, and the philosopher was in the act of closing the door, when Cahill came running back.

'Mr. Heywood,' he said, 'some fine day soon I'm going over to Killard. There's a lot of wonderful scientific things to be seen there—the ocean, and great high rocks, and sea-weed and the fishing-boats. There'll be no one with me but myself. Maybe you'd do me the honour of not refusing a seat on my car. I'm sure it would do you good, and you could look around the scientific wonders of the place.'

The old man hesitated and considered awhile, then answered freely:

'I shall be very happy indeed to go, although I don't think anything there is likely to take me unawares. Good night.' He retired, and Cahill was alone.

With his head drooped low, Cahill stood awhile. Then, rising out of deep thought, he muttered, as he turned and walked down the street:

'I'll bring him face to face with David Lane; maybe he can make something out of it. Wherever I go, whatever way I turn, asleep or awake, David Lane and his property of the Bishop's Island are never far from me, and something whispers to me that it wasn't for nothing my father told me that history a hundred times, until I feel as if the history, and what caused the history, is my fate! my fate! my fate! And I'll know what is hidden of that history; my fortune lies in finding it out. I'll know it, or———'

He did not finish the sentence, for his eyes at that moment caught sight of two men in front. He quickened his pace, until he was sufficiently near to make them out by the light of the stars.

Could it be? Yes, there was no doubt of it. Tom the Fool and David Lane were walking on before him in a street of Clonmore; and Lane had not been in that

town for years, and never in the company of Tom. What could he want there now, and at such a time of night?

Cahill dropped a little to the rear, and pausing just long enough to allow of their getting beyond the sound of his footsteps, stole after them as quietly as his feet could fall.

CHAPTER VII.

'TEN GUINEAS!'

For a hundred yards or so the two men kept straight on. Then they turned into a by-street and disappeared from Cahill's sight. He ran, gained the corner, and peered cautiously down the way they had taken.

A few paces from the corner the two men stood in a doorway. The Fool, just as young Cahill looked, raised his arm and knocked.

'What can they want at Dillon's this hour of night? Fishing tackle? But couldn't the Fool get that for Lane as he does for all the village?' Cahill whispered, as he slipped into a deep portico from which he could see without being observed.

For some time there was no response to the knocking. It was repeated thrice. Then a window above opened, and a head appeared, and a voice asked crossly, 'Who's there? What do you want?'

'There's Dillon himself,' muttered Cahill.

'It's only Tom the Fool and David Lane, of the Bishop's Island. Open the door. He has money to leave you.'

'What an hour! Won't to-morrow do? This is no

time for business.' The shopkeeper's tones were not so rough as at first.

'No, no! To-morrow won't do. Luke Dillon, come down at once, or I'll go on my knees to that old she-wolf of a grandmother of mine, and ask her to send storms of hail, snow and wind on you and yours, and your house.'

The words were uttered fiercely and rapidly. As this threat of his always immediately preceded quarrelling, the head at the window was withdrawn, and in a few moments the door opened and the two entered.

Dillon's shop, lighted by only the candle the owner carried, looked like a lofty wine-vault festooned with enormous fungi. From hooks in the ceiling hung great misty fishing nets, long whips, bridles, hanks of cordage; here and there glittered columns of fishing-rods, with shadowy capitals of landing-nets; against the counter stood saddles on stands; against the walls, in racks, shone guns and blunderbusses; on the counter were powder-flasks.

The proprietor, a short, grey old man, turned to Tom and asked, in a querulous voice, 'Now, what is it you want at this unseasonable hour of night?'

Before replying, Tom went up close to Dillon, and put his hand on the old man's shoulder, 'My friend David Lane wants to buy a gun.'

'A gun!' cried the old man, in amazement. 'A gun! For what?'

'To shoot sea-fowl on his own property, the Bishop's Island,' returned Tom with dignity. Then he added fiercely, 'And he's going to do his best for me against the old she-wolf; he promised me that. Now, are you answered, Luke Dillon?'

'But, but——'

'Ah! Is that the way you are, Luke Dillon? Maybe you'd like to have her at first on trial for a month or two. She'd soon find out where the roof is bad, and the sashes rotten; she'd soon scrape the putty out of the sashes and the mortar out of the slates. Tell me this, Luke Dillon, how would you like to be killed in your sins by a stack of chimneys falling through the floors? Tell me that, Luke Dillon; for she'd do that while a gull would be lifting a sprat out of a shoal!' The dull eyes of the Fool were looking fiercely into the blinking eyes of the old man, and the mute's muscles stood, as it were, at attention.

'But has he got a license? I daren't do it unless he has got a license. It would be as much as my own license is worth.'

'He has gold to pay you with, and I have the silver of Killard at my back; and if you don't take the gold you'll never see another tenpenny of Killard's money, for I'll go to Blake's for tackle, and you'll have the winds of winter in summer on you and yours.'

He made a few rapid gestures to his companion. The latter opened his hand towards the light. Several gold pieces glittered on the red palm.

Dillon stared in wonder. Where could the ragged man before him have got gold. Gold was almost unknown at Killard. Notes and silver and copper were to be found there in small quantities, but not one gold piece. There existed a prejudice against the yellow metal. The old man wavered for a moment. He counted the pieces with his eye; five, five sovereigns they seemed. But before he spoke he considered the risk. If any evil came of this gun, what trouble there

would be! This ignorant man with a bad name, living in the heart of some great secret—this dumb desperate man—what could he want of a gun? Nothing good. Sea-fowl? They were almost valueless—that is, Lane could do nothing with them. To trust fire-arms into the hands of this outcast and this half-witted man! No! the risk was too great; he'd take none of it. Then he said, 'I daren't do it! I daren't do it! And even if I did the police would take himself and the gun. No one can have fire-arms without a license. The district is proclaimed.'

'You won't tell the police, I won't tell the police, he can't tell the police; as to the hag of wickedness, she can only blow and yell, but never say a word. Take the yellow gold and give the gun, or you're done with the gold and silver of Killard, and the storms will be your blankets to-morrow night. Give the gun, and at once, for we must be going; it's late, and we have to tramp the road to Killard before day. I want to steal back in the darkness, or she'll see me. The boy is all by himself on the Island, and if the witch knew the father and I were away she'd raise a whirlwind and kill the boy. Give the man the gun, Luke Dillon!'

When Tom spoke in the interests of his friends, the Lanes, there always seemed to be some trace of reason in his words; he appeared capable of calculating the effect likely to be produced by certain thoughts or considerations. At other times he never looked outside himself, but spoke without any regard to effect.

'I won't, I won't!—and now that's all about it, and you may go.'

The shopkeeper's voice and manner were now final.

Tom made signs to Lane. Lane looked doggedly at the old man and showed no intention of moving.

'Besides,' continued the gunsmith, 'you don't know how dear guns are. They cost pounds and pounds. Now here's one of the cheapest I have, and it's ten guineas.'

He took down a wretched old fowling-piece, not worth a couple of sovereigns, and showed it to Lane. He thought, upon second consideration, that it would be better to ask an exorbitant price, one quite beyond Lane's power to pay, than to refuse point blank to sell.

A long pantomime ensued between the Fool and Lane. The bright sharp eyes of the deaf mute glittered with swift intelligence. He made rapid angry gestures, breathing hard the while. At length his friend seemed to comprehend.

'Ay, David Lane, you have a head; you have a head!' he muttered with admiration and pride. 'You carry the head and I carry the tongue. That's it! He carries the head and I carry the tongue. We are only the makings for one. The black hag scraped the sense out of my head and the speech off his tongue. There was only enough for one man between us, and she divided us into two, and there's only one head to plan and one tongue to ask for what two carcasses want.'

This 'aside' seemed to weary the mute. During its delivery he had been carelessly examining the piece by the light of the candle. He now placed the gun beside the candle and made signals to Tom.

'All right,' replied the Fool, 'let us go.'

He opened the street door and stepped out. Lane, in following him, stumbled and knocked the candle

down and extinguished it. The mute stooped and groped about.

'Tom,' said the old man in a tone of relief—he was glad to get rid of his visitors—'tell him not to mind the candle; I'll find it myself.'

The Fool re-entered, and, having touched Lane, the two were soon after in the street. As soon as they were gone Dillon shut the door and bolted it.

The old man went into the back room—he did not like striking matches in the shop. Presently he returned with one burning in his hand. He sought and found the candle. When it was lighting he rose from his stooping position and reached out his hand for the gun. With an oath he started back. He was about to rush to the door and rouse the place and follow the two, when suddenly his eyes caught something glittering at the distant end of the counter. Hastily he approached the spot.

The gun was gone, but on the counter lay ten pieces of gold. He took them up in blank wonderment. He weighed them dreamily on the ends of his fingers. Then suddenly the light came back to his eyes. Something peculiar in the coins riveted his attention, and he whispered in a low voice, as though he doubted the evidence of his senses and expected to wake up in a moment and find it daylight:

'I said ten guineas, ten guineas! thinking he had no more than five sovereigns. There were only five coins then in his hand. But these are not sovereigns, but guineas! Ten golden guineas! Ten old-fashioned guineas!'

CHAPTER VIII.

A SOUND FROM THE ISLAND.

BETWEEN the years 1844 and 1854, famine and pestilence visited Ireland. People perished of hunger in the streets, in the fields, in the churches. They crawled from remote villages in the weary hope of obtaining food in the towns and cities, and were found dead by the wayside. Some who reached towns or cities by night, and knew not whither to turn, lay down near bakehouses where bread was being made at midnight, and were taken away stiff and stark before the first woman came to purchase. Men whose business took them abroad early, in the darkness, fell over the bodies of women taking their long rest on door-steps. Haggard, wild-eyed spectres of men haunted the roads and streets, and desperate mothers clutched starving infants to their barren breasts.

Before the Blight, beggars took offence if offered potatoes only, and potatoes rotted in trenches for sheer want of mouths to eat them. The Blight came, and those who had been donors to the poor gnawed cabbage stalks, or strove to allay the agony of starvation with grass and acorns and scraps of leather. In many districts there were for each day more people than loaves or potatoes, and from such places came hideous whispers, too awful for human lips to speak aloud.

In the wake of famine, pestilence crept to the shore of the stricken land to finish the work of ruin. Time mowed with no sickle then, but with a broad and universal wind. There were no fields of men to slay and fields to spare; but, like a storm passing through orchards

when the fruit is heavy, all the trees were shaken and each suffered loss. Burying the dead was a monotonous toil; morning, noon, and night, men were digging graves and others were filling them in. Often he who dug at dawn was covered in himself before sun-down.

In towns large wooden sheds were erected for those who fled the lonely fields, that they might die in sight of man. Most of these fugitives from solitude, after a day or perhaps two days, found the sheds and died within the sight of human eyes. It was not a season for tears. People had no time to indulge sentiments. They sat pale and awe-stricken; carefully, heedfully, watching and noting how the plague fluctuated, who fell; guarding themselves and those dear to them against risk, and swiftly burying the dead. Burying the dead by day and by night. Burying the dead calmly and resolutely, as though all reason for living had passed away, and there was only reason to die. Burying the dead in half-envious despair. Burying the dead as though they cried, 'These go to their brethren who are before them; but we remain to see all, all depart from us; our portion is the silent chamber and the deserted field. Are all we love to go before we go? Which of our kinsfolk shall we break earth for next? Here are our young daughters, our mothers, our wives, our lusty sons, our fathers. Call the roll! Pay no heed to the places vacant already. But which of those that answer now will fall asleep to-morrow?'

'Good-bye, sweetheart! I am going a journey into the country, and shall not be with you for a week.'

'A week! A whole weary week. How long!'

On the fourth day they buried him, and on the fifth they had forgotten where.

'He is but three days gone,' she cried, 'and I shall be three days gone away for ever before he returns. The shadow of night is gathering on my hands. Look! A week seemed long when he was going, and now a week has grown to Never!'

Never! Who said never? The world had conspired to separate them for a week, but in four days Heaven marred the conspiracy.

Those were times thick with sombre horrors in Ireland. Let us hope men may never see their like again.

The little village of Killard suffered severely from both the famine and pestilence. One-fourth of its inhabitants had fallen victims. Within seven days of each other, honest John Cantillon and his faithful wife, Bridget, came to the churchyard, never to depart until the general uprising. A month later, the wife of David Lane found there a quieter resting-place than that afforded by the lonely hut on the Bishop's Island.

In the cottage of John Cantillon now dwelt Edward Martin and his wife Mary, daughter of Cantillon, with their little child, a fair-haired, blue-eyed girl of six years.

On the Island lived David Lane and his son, the latter being now ten years old. The boy was tall for his age, lank, long-limbed, uncouth. He possessed the hereditary bright eyes, but he showed no indication of the muscular alertness of his father. He was slow to move. Such time as lay at his disposal he spent in the summer-time lying on the short moss and looking at the sea; in winter he loved best to sit by the fire, his chief delight being to weave upon the darkness hoops and bows, and other designs, with a spray of glowing faggot. Often he would sit whole hours together gazing into the dull turf fire; at such times, when his father roused him by putting his

hand on his son's shoulder, the boy would start and look up half-alarmed, half-displeased, as though he had been awakened out of a pleasant reverie. For some time before David Lane paid his midnight visit to Dillon's shop, there had been a marked change in the conduct of father to son. Since the hour the boy had been delivered into his father's hands by the stranger who brought him from the inland, the elder Lane had treated the boy with the tenderness of a woman. He allowed him to do no rougher work than bait the hooks of the hand-lines. All else he did himself. He went to Killard and sold the fish, and bought the simple necessaries of their narrow home. He kindled the fire, cooked the food, and, when it was very cold, made a fire in the chamber occupied by the boy. Frequently he would take his child fondly in his arms, and hold him softly to his breast, muttering inarticulate sounds over him.

Of late, although he still kept the boy from toil, he seemed to stand in fear of him, and his affectionate embraces grew very few, and became spasmodic. He would catch his son suddenly and press him wildly to him, and then, setting him down, regard him almost fiercely for a moment, cover his eyes, and rush hastily away. All this perplexed the child. Sometimes, after one of those scenes, when the father returned, the boy would go up to him and wind his arms around him, and gaze into his eyes with a sad, questioning look, as though in protest. For a while the love of the parent predominated, and he would kiss the boy ; then, when the latter moved his lips, the father concealed his face with one hand, and with the other repelled his son. All this troubled the child, and often as he sat by the fire his hot tears made gleaming rainbows around the turf, and fell slowly on his listless hands.

This singular man, dwelling apart from all of the race save his child, separated from mankind by the terrible affliction his father had deliberately sought to place upon him, had centred the whole affection of his dark and stormy nature on his boy. He had watched him day by day as he grew, and had solaced his soul with the thought of their continual intercourse. When he visited Killard his questioning eyes and hands were ever among children, if they were by. He inquired their ages, took them up and weighed them, felt their limbs curiously, and when the balance turned in favour of his own child, set them down with a proud smile. The people all declared, that, whatever the crimes of the Lanes might be, this man loved his boy as few fathers loved theirs.

Now some canker had entered in—some dark suspicion, some half-developed dread. Yet no alteration was visible in the boy. Tom the Fool, who was strangely quick to notice everything connected with his friends, saw the alteration, and wondered. But he was reticent in all things concerning the deaf mute and his son, and told nothing about it in the village. People said the Fool was jealous of his friendship with the Lanes, and in his nebulous mind there lay a band of exclusion round the Bishop's, and he would allow no one inside this band. Tom had frequently interrogated Lane, but could get no reply. The father seemed to deny the alteration, and was always angry when the Fool questioned him. Latterly Tom had been seldom a visitor to the Island. Often a whole month passed without his once leaving the mainland.

It was broad daylight when David Lane, carrying the gun, arrived opposite the Bishop's. He had paid Dillon five times the value of the gun, but it was not till next morning the gunsmith discovered that with the gun

had disappeared a half-pound canister of powder. This canister was now in Lane's pocket.

Lane threw the gun down, and, standing on the edge of the cliff, looked round, as if to make sure no one watched his movements. Not a soul was in sight. At the point where he stood, the distance from the mainland to the island was no more than sixty feet. It seemed almost possible to jump across. Two hundred feet below groaned and churned the never-quiet waters of the Atlantic. In the brightest day the sun never reached the bottom of this chasm, and it was always filled with a dim grey darkness, like the blue bloom under trees in summer. Down the side of the Island, directly opposite where Lane stood, hung a rope with a loop at the end, and from the loop depended a confused tangle of cordage. The villagers knew that this rope formed the bridge. They had often seen him cross from the Island, but none had ever seen him return.

Having satisfied himself that he was unobserved, Lane stooped, and with his hands removed some clay a few feet from the brink. A large iron hook was disclosed. The eye of the hook pointed inland. Two large iron bolts, driven into the ground, held the hook firmly in its place.

So much the villagers knew, and further, that he, when wanting to leave his home, cast that loop over the hook, and crossed under the rope. But they did not know how, when he was once over, and had cast back the rope, he ever re-formed his bridge. How did he get the loop back again? Often, when feeling ran high against the Lanes, the people had talked of coming in the night and tearing up this hook, and so cutting him completely off. But there was an aspect of murder about the idea, and they forbore.

Lane now thrust his hand into his bosom, and drew forth a small bundle of fishing-line. This he quickly unwound. It was twenty yards long, and in the centre lay what fishermen call a stroke-haul, that is, three hooks tied together, so as to resemble a small grappling-iron. From the end of the stroke-haul depended a bullet as sinker. Again he looked suspiciously around. Then, peering into the dim depths of the chasm, he commenced slowly paying out the line.

The face of the cliff was so sheer that, when the line all but about a yard was run out, the stroke-haul swung free of the rock. He looked carefully over the edge. The eye could not discern the line at more than half its length, and even the bullet had disappeared. Holding the line out at arm's-length, he walked a few paces along the very brink. Then suddenly the line tightened. He wound up a few yards of it, and, drawing it in cautiously, returned to his old station.

Then he took in the line hand over hand. Before half of it lay beside him on the cliff, the rope hanging from the Island began to stretch across the rift towards where he stood. With a jerk the stroke-haul came into view, and in one of the hooks rested a loop of fine black cord. Taking this cord in his hand, he pulled vigorously, and in less than a minute the eye of the rope came up.

Thirty feet down the cliff was a fissure, and in this fissure a small bar of iron, and attached to this bar of iron the cord to which the rope was tied. The bar might be placed there by lowering it from the cliff into the fissure. The dimness of the chasm made it impossible to see the black cord.

Having secured the loop to the hook, he pushed the tangle of cords which had hung from it out on the rope

until it hung over the brink. It formed a rude network of five meshes, each mesh being about a foot wide.

Into this network he crept head foremost, taking the gun with him, and facing downwards. As soon as he was fully in, he turned, faced the pale blue morning sky, and, seizing the rope with his hands and feet, worked himself across with surprising swiftness and ease. As soon as he had landed, he, by a vigorous shake, communicated an upward serpentine wave to the rope, at the same moment lowering his hand to the ground. The loop spread out of the hook, and the rope fell to its old position. Thus the Island was once more cast loose into isolation.

Lane paused a moment, turned round, and inspected the Island narrowly, apparently to his satisfaction. Then he crossed the summit, and opening the door of his chamber, entered it.

The yellow sun stood over the level downs. Far out on the sea reached the dark green water in the heavy shadow of the cliffs. Beyond the shadow the ocean lay, a blue sheet of radiance under a cloudless sky. The dews were ascending from the brittle grass.

Beneath the summits of the gigantic rocks, sea-fowl cried as they flew slowly from the land. No object broke the vast expanse of ocean. No sound fell into the vacant vault of heaven, save the cries of the birds. Peace reigned over all the scene, as though no conflict of tempest ever racked the coast; as though the message of peace to man was written in colossal characters on the face of nature.

In the small chamber facing the south slept the boy. He knew nothing of his father's visit to Clonmore. The man had left the Island without letting his son know of his intention. During the previous day, the manner of

the father had been more excited than ever. One of those scenes had occurred between the two. While Lane was preparing the midday meal of potatoes and fish, an accident occurred. The boy was sitting before the fire watching the fish frying. The father, behind him, held an earthen plate in his hand. Suddenly it slipped from his grasp, and was broken into fragments on the hard earthen floor. With an inarticulate cry, the father turned round to claim his son's attention; but his eyes no sooner met the figure of the child than he sprang back with a yell. The boy had already risen, and stood regarding the fragments.

A wild fury sprang into Lane's eyes. He rushed at the boy, and, raising his arm, struck him heavily. In all that had been before, nothing like this had occurred. A blow! a blow, and no blame attributable to him!

For an instant the boy drew himself up, and glared defiance at his father. Then all the anger went out of his face, and, with a loud sob of pain and grief, he threw himself on his father's bed, and covered his head with the clothes.

The man stood and buried his wild bright eyes in the prostrate form. His whole frame shook with passion. His chest heaved, and through his dilated nostrils he breathed fiercely.

Then, almost as suddenly as it had come, his passion deserted him. The fury left his eyes, the rigidity of countenance gave place to softness, after which came a look of almost awful tenderness and regret; then, with a hoarse moan, he flung himself beside the child, and seized him in his arms and wept over him like a mother.

The boy's chamber was no more than twelve feet square. The walls were rough, unplastered. The stout beams supporting the roof were seven feet from the

ground at their least height. Unlike cottages of far greater dimensions, this hut had a fire-grate of four iron bars in each room. The chamber occupied by the boy had been the cell of the Bishop. In it there was but one small window, and that looked south. The furniture was scanty; it consisted of a small deal table, an old-fashioned bedstead without its roof, two chairs, and a three-legged stool. Against the wall hung a piece of looking-glass.

The boy was fast asleep. His chest and arms were bare; his head drooped forward; a faint smile rested on his lips, and down his cheeks were tear-stains. Already fact had proved to this child more harsh than fiction. The sleeping delusions were sweet, the waking realities bitter.

In one hand he held a heavy clasp knife. Before going to bed, he had taken it out of his pocket, and fondled it, and when he lay down he kept it close to his cheek. Perhaps the salt waters of the ocean had made the red spot visible on the back of the spring; perhaps the warm tears. But now the tears were dry, and he was smiling in his dreams. Maybe he was once more living through the happy moment when his father, taking him on his knee, first disclosed the wonders of that great clasp-knife to him, opened out all the blades, the miniature saw, the tiny gimlet, the slender marlinspike; and when all were shown, and their uses illustrated, handed him the miracle, and patted his head, and pressed him in his arms.

Suddenly the door of the boy's room opened, and David Lane entered. It was near seven o'clock. The boy was usually stirring at that hour. He must have lain awake long.

The father came and stood by the bedside. He saw

the tear-stains and the clasp-knife, and he seemed to understand. Awhile he stood with his arms folded on his broad chest, regarding his son with a dull, sad face. The door behind him remained open, and through the doorway entered the broad, pure light of morning. The foot of the bed was almost opposite the doorway, and the light struck fully on the boy's smiling face. Evidently Lane feared it might wake him, for, stretching his hand back, he closed the door.

Instantly the smile passed off the countenance of the sleeper, and a gloom flitted across it. Then, with a wail, the boy started, leaned upon his elbow, and looked fearfully at his father. The two remained motionless for a time. With a sigh that shook him from head to foot, the father made a sign to the boy to rise, and left the cell.

David Lane went back to his own chamber and bolted the door. He took out the gun from under his bed, and proceeded to load it. He had seen men shoot birds on the beach at Killard, and knew how to charge the weapon. He poured in a large charge of powder, upon which he rammed down a piece of rag. Then from a box he drew forth some hand-lines, and cutting off one of the bullet sinkers, found with satisfaction that it fitted the barrel. When the bullet had been dropped down, he drove in another piece of rag, and then raised the cock.

After this, he paused a long while in thought. At length he lifted his head suddenly and smiled, and shook his head in self-approval. From the box wherein he had found the bullet, he now took a piece of thin sheet-lead, of which the lighter kind of sinkers are made. He cut off a small square piece, and, by the aid of a spray of faggot, fashioned this into a little cap. Into this he peeled the phosphorous composition from the head of a

lucifer-match, and when this was done dropped the cap over the nipple of the gun. After that he placed the gun, without lowering the hammer, under the bed, stood awhile in an attitude of thought, with his hand to his brow. His eyes grew gradually dim, his hand fell, his whole frame relaxed, and, stretching out his arms as if to embrace his boy, he burst into tears.

The village of Killard was by this time awake and stirring. The boats had been out all night, and came home deep laden with fish. Under the silvery light of the morning, mackerel, and hake, and gurnet, and rock-fish, and pollock and cod writhed and twisted on the yellow sand. There had been no better night all the summer, and the men were less rough and more playful than usual; the women, who had come to help their husbands and sons and brothers to carry the spoil to Pat Casey's, were demurer than the men.

Some saw in the dozen and a half hake a new handkerchief. Here, in this score of mackerel, was a new pair of boots for little Jack. Those four fine cod could not do less than obtain the material for a pair of serge trousers for the man of the house.

There was much talk and laughter among the men as they smoked their short clay pipes while the women sorted the fish. But the women had weighty matters on their minds, and spoke little, and resented badinage from the men with a kind of proud displeasure. To their minds it was not a time for levity, but for sorting the fish and maturing the wisest manner of bestowing the proceeds.

A little distance from the group of men and women a currach lay high and dry, bottom up on the sand. While the business of sorting the fish was at its height, this

currach began to move without any exterior aid. Looks and exclamations of surprise ran round. Presently a pair of large fat hands appeared, and then a head, followed by a clumsy ragged body, and after a little wriggling and spluttering, a pair of legs came into view, and a man scrambled to his feet.

'Is that you, Tom?' cried several voices at once, as the Fool, rubbing his eyes, confronted the little crowd.

'Faith, Tom,' said Mrs. Martin, 'it's careful you are of your complexion, to make a sunshade of a currach when you're taking your morning stroll on your all-fours like an elderly crab.'

'Whist!' cried Tom angrily; 'don't be talking like a foolish woman. Mind your work, and sort the fish.' He did not seem disposed to take jests pleasantly.

The woman laughed good-humouredly. 'Your early rising won't do you much harm if your long fast doesn't spoil your figure.'

'I tell you, stop; don't be talking.'

'I think there must have been a crooked straw in your bed last night,' she continued, pointing to the upturned currach; 'you got up so cross.' There was a general laugh.

'You'll be wanting goose grease for sore lips yet, and won't have the price of it if you waste the skin of your tongue like that.'

This time the laugh was against Mrs. Martin, but the success of the sally did not in the least diminish Tom's bad humour; if anything, it made it worse.

'Don't mind them, Tom,' cried Edward Martin, in a soothing voice, as he approached the Fool. 'Here's a gurnet for your breakfast. Go up to Pat Casey's and roast it at the kitchen fire.'

'May you never, Edward Martin, want for gurnet or grace either here or hereafter. And may——'

He paused suddenly and looked round in wild alarm. A slight reverberation had floated over the water.

'What's the matter, Tom?' demanded Martin, observing the Fool's expression.

'Did you hear anything?' he asked, growing white.

'Yes; some sound coming up from the south'ard.'

'A gun?' he inquired piteously.

'Yes, it might be a gun. Some one shooting gulls on the downs.'

'No, no; not the downs—the Bishop's. The dummy bought a gun last night, but I didn't know he had either powder or shot; and he told me when he asked me to go with him that he hadn't any; and—and—and——'

'And what?' cried several. They were all now standing around Tom, listening eagerly.

'And if that she-wolf didn't give it to him, who did? and if she didn't put thoughts into his head, she that has a spite against him and his, because they're my friends, no one else did.'

'Well, but there's no harm in his firing his gun?'

'But the she-wolf has been busy with him already, and there's bad blood between father and son. Will some one come with me? I couldn't look at it if there was any harm, because only for me he'd have no gun.'

His listeners had now been thoroughly roused, and, leading a small band of volunteers, Tom set out for the Bishop's at a run.

CHAPTER IX.

FROM KILLARD TO THE BISHOP'S.

ABREAST with the Fool strode Edward Martin. The lank, bony young man of 1843 had developed into a broad-shouldered muscular giant in 1854. He measured over six feet, but his great breadth of shoulders and depth of chest made him look no more than the average height. He was reputed to be the strongest man in the parish.

A Clare currach is a boat of almost the lightest construction, but it will carry twenty people. In build it is clumsy and shapeless-looking. It has neither keel nor keelson. Like a Dutch galliot, its stem and stern are round; like the craft they call a prong or prom in the south and west of Ireland, its bow and stem rise out of the water, and when under way it skims over the waves rather than cuts through them. On the Shannon and other rivers, the prong is chiefly used for shooting rapids. It has a flat bottom and flat bow, and by this bow being raised out of the water there is less danger of the craft swamping when it rushes headlong into the white foam.

The long heavy swells of the Atlantic on this coast are so many rapids to be climbed and shot, and the light tarred canvas currach, with its round blunt bows and its unresisting keelless bottom, enabling it to be spun swiftly this way or that to meet the eddying sweep, is found to be the safest and most serviceable model. Two men can carry it with ease, but not more than one man in all Killard could by himself lift it and carry it, arms up, and this one man was Edward Martin. All the villagers had seen him do it.

Two years before this morning a bet was made. A number of fishermen subscribed twenty shillings, and laid the money against him. He, the best of fishermen in Killard, put down his pound, raised the currach in his huge arms, and carried it aloft five hundred yards, amid the cheers of all, of even those who had lost.

When he lowered the currach, he sat down on it to rest and wipe his flushed, steaming face. Pat Casey, who had arranged the bets and held the money, came to him, and, stretching out his hand, said cordially :

'Well done, Edward Martin ! You won fairly, and deserve the money. Take it, for no other man in this parish, or the next one to it, could do the like of that.'

Martin did not reach out his hand, but continued to wipe his face and neck.

'Take your money, man !' cried Casey, in a tone of expostulation. Casey knew Martin did not like the idea of the bet.

Martin turned to his wife, who stood beside him. She was weeping for joy at the triumph of her husband.

'You would not think,' she was saying to her heart, 'that he had the strength to raise an oar when he takes our little Mary in his arms ; and look at what he has done to-day ! But strong as his arms are, his love is stronger, and his goodness as strong as ever was goodness in man. My husband !'

At the crowning thought that he was hers, she gave a sob of gratitude, and, sitting down beside him, put her arm on his great shoulder, just as he turned to speak to her.

'Mary,' he said, 'take the money, you. Take the money from Pat Casey, and I'll tell you what to do with it by-and-by.'

When they were walking together, he said :

'If I could afford to lose that pound I betted, I can afford to give it away. The men who betted against me have not as much as I, and they cannot as well afford ten shillings as I can my pound. Tell no one, but go to Father Murtagh, and let him know all, and give him the money Pat Casey gave you, and ask him to keep it until (and may it be a long time off!) some poor fellows are lost, and their wives and children are in want; then ask him to do the best with the money for the poor widows and orphans.'

The next Sunday Father Murtagh preached on charity, and said, without mentioning names, that one man present understood what charity was, for he wished better to succour the afflicted than to blazon his name, and he desired to serve his fellows on earth, and keep himself out of their gratitude on earth, which was the proper way to secure their gratitude, and the approval of God, when all meet in Heaven.

By some subtle instinct the people suspected who the charitable man was, and looked at him. His wife could not refrain from tears, and this confirmed the suspicions. From that out the presence of Edward Martin always calmed and soothed, and elevated the villagers like a prayer.

On the August morning, Tom the Fool and his little group of volunteers set out for the Bishop's Island; the face of Edward Martin, usually grave, wore a sombre look.

'I hope there's nothing wrong at the Island!' he said to Tom.

The other men followed at a short distance. Martin held a little aloof from the villagers. They looked on

him as a superior, and, therefore, the men now kept behind, allowing him and Lane's great friend to lead.

'I hope not, Edward Martin; I hope not. But I have had my doubts some time. Lane is a madman when put out. He's not a fool like me, but mad like a storm, without any sense or reason in his legs or arms, or head.'

'I hope nothing has happened; for, Tom, now I'll tell you what you must speak of to no one.'

'Not to a soul?'

'No, not to a soul.'

'Not even my friends on the Bishop's?'

'Not them; not them most of all, for it's about the boy, and it would put the father in a rage if he knew.'

'Anything against the boy? any harm that is coming to him? That's if the worst harm hasn't—' he paused, did not finish the sentence, but muttered 'Ugh!'

'No, nothing that will bring or has brought harm to anyone.'

'Tell me.'

'I'm the boy's godfather.'

'Godfather, Edward Martin! What do you mean? Do you take me for a fool? He never was out of his father's sight ashore, and no one was ever on the Island but myself. Who christened him?'

'Father Murtagh, in Casey's stable. You may take my word for that. Well, I often thought, Tom, that I ought to try and do something for him. You know I promised then, and when I make a promise I mean what I say—'

'You're a good man, Edward Martin, and you gave me a gurnet this morning, and here it is.'

'Well, I often thought,' continued Martin, 'that if anything happened David Lane I'd take care of the boy,

and get him taught, as far as one of that family can be taught, what I promised for him ten years ago.'

'You're a good man, Edward Martin; but is that all! Between them and all harm, including the she-wolf—bless the hearers! but if any harm came to Lane, the boy would die. Would you do anything but teach him?'

'Yes, I'd do more. I'd take him, and do for him.'

'You would! you would!' cried the Fool, bounding and capering around the fisherman. 'Horah! Horah! My friends have another friend at last. Horah! And that,' snapping his fingers, 'for the old she-wolf now. With Tom the Fool and Edward Martin, I'll laugh at all she can do against me or my friends.'

They had by this time got more than half-way. The downs stretched away quite flat, with no wall or shrub of any kind to obstruct the view. Martin was by far the tallest of the men. When Tom became quiet once more, a man in the rear called out, 'Mr. Martin, you're the tallest; I think I see something on the mainland, near the Bishop's! Do you?'

They all stopped. Martin shaded his eyes, and looked with that calm deliberation peculiar to seamen. At length he spoke:

'Yes, I see a figure lying on the downs.'

'Which?' screamed the Fool.

'The boy. Let us run.'

And they dashed off at the top of their speed.

CHAPTER X.

A TRAITOR DISCOVERED.

WHEN, on that August morning, Lane's son left his sleeping chamber in the hut, he found his father busily engaged preparing breakfast. The spirits of the boy seemed utterly crushed; the father was dull and gloomy, with a lowering danger in his eyes, but his actions were as kind as usual. He helped his son liberally to food, and pressed him to eat more, when the boy appeared satisfied. But he did not kiss him, or fondle him, as was his custom. The boy's eyes were full of tears, and he could hardly swallow the potatoes and fish. He rarely looked at his father, and when their glances chanced to meet, the latter dropped his and frowned.

As soon as breakfast was finished, the father cleared the table. Then, turning to the boy, he made signs to him, and the son, taking a basket, went out, crossed the Island, and descended slowly and heedlessly the precipitous path leading to the ledge. Here he drew in the hand-lines, removed the fish, and rebaited the hooks. Having gathered the fish into the basket, he sat down and fixed his eyes wearily on the sea.

Meanwhile, the father had taken the gun out of its hiding place under the bed, examined it carefully at the nipple, and placed it against the inner edge of the door jamb. When this was done, he stood outside the door, so as to command a view of the head of the path leading to the ledge, folded his arms, set his teeth, knit his brow, and waited.

The sky was serene and blue, not a cloud broke the infinite expanse. The light was cool and gracious; the

air fresh and invigorating. The sea-fowl had by this time passed out from shore, and their shrill dreary notes no longer floated above the dull low murmur of the swells two hundred and fifty feet below.

The boy was long—much longer than usual, but David Lane never moved a muscle. His attitude and his features remained as fixed as though a withering vapour from the pole had frozen him as he stood. The expression of his countenance was that of one awaiting fate, rather than one expecting a foe; but it was tragic. Tragic with a dire resolution, and far down under the resolution, a wild appalling grief. It was not the face of a man who thought. There was no trace of succession of ideas, but it seemed as though his mind, like his body, was frozen into one unalterable attitude; as though one picture were burned against that path, and nothing could displace it.

At length, above the level of the Island, appeared the boy's head.

No muscle of the father moved. He remained rigid.

The shoulders and bust of the boy rose into view; then the arms and basket he carried.

Still David Lane never stirred.

The figure of the child emerged completely, and he took one pace in the direction of the hut.

Instantly, as though the vitality of a thousand men had been flung upon him, the father sprang into the hut, seized the gun, lifted it to his shoulder, and, aiming at the chimney place, fired.

The explosion was terrific, for the charge was large and the chamber small, and, in the calm of the morning, it seemed as though the Bishop's Island had been riven from summit to base.

Upon the instant he fired, quick as the flash itself, the man spun round on his heel and looked at the door. No smoke had reached it. The smoke lay huddled in blue waves near the fire-place.

Then Lane folded his arms swiftly across his breast, knit his brows, and, setting his teeth, stood inside the door confronting fate, as he had awaited it without.

In a second, the boy bounded into the open, pale and awe-stricken. His eyes were wild with terror. He had lost his hat and his basket, and his hair waved hither and thither as if blown by a wind. When he saw his father standing safe before him, the expression changed electrically, and, with a low moan of relief, he stretched forth his arms and sank to the ground.

The father sprang back, as though the nether realms gaped at his feet, and, with a wild shrill yell of despair, threw his hands towards Heaven, and, with his up-turned eyes and out-stretched arms, seemed to clamour for annihilation. While the father remained thus, the boy lay motionless on the ground. His arms were doubled under him, and his knees drawn up; his face deadly pale, his lips blue, his eyes open but rayless.

In a few moments the father's arms dropped; the expression of his face altered, and his eyes fell upon the prostrate form in the doorway. Stepping hastily forward, he sprang over the child, and, having reached the open air, strode several times up and down the Island, through the white warm sunshine and fragrant dewy air. Then he returned to the doorway and looked in.

The position of the figure had not changed in the least. Again David Lane turned away, and dashed hither and thither blindly. Once more he paused at the doorway. The boy had not moved. A sudden fear

seemed to seize upon the father. He leaped into the hut, stooped near the fire-place, and examined the wall. Presently, with his fingers, he picked something out from between two of the stones. Holding this to the light, he examined it carefully. Yes, it was the chief portion of the leaden bullet. It broke in two as he turned it in his hand, and showed in the interior an old seam. That was the cut through which the hand-line had passed. A look of angry perplexity now passed over his face, and his eyes turned once more to the ground, near the doorway.

Not a muscle had stirred; not a fold of the clothes had been displaced. Frowning heavily, as if he suspected a trick, the father crossed the room, stooped, and, catching the child at the waist, lifted him. The head, and arms, and lower limbs hung down limp and nerveless.

A spasm of horror passed over the features of the father, and he shook the child once, twice, thrice, without effect. Then, lifting him higher, he carried him across the little chamber, and placed him on the bed where the boy's mother had died. He put a pillow under his son's head, drew down his limbs, and crossed the long arms over the breast. When this was done, he sat down as far off as he could, and regarded the bed with a rigid expressionless air.

In a little while a light shot into his eyes. He rose, kindled a candle, and held the flame opposite the open lips. He had seen this done in Killard during the cholera years. The yellow flame, pale and sickly in the blaze of the August morning, flicked and waved regularly. The child breathed. He flung the candle down, and resumed his old position.

He had seen death and sleep; these were the only

forms of human unconsciousness with which he was familiar. But here was something which was more deep than sleep, less profound than death. What could it be? Was the boy ever to wake? If sleep, which is less powerful than this, lasts a night time, how long will this last? A week or a month?

Death lasts for ever, and sleep for a night; when will this be over, and what is the end to be, deeper or lighter sleep, death or waking?

Whichever it was, doubts that had haunted his mind for a long time were now made certainties. He had seen sea-fowl, which had been invisible, rise and fly away in terror at the firing of a gun, yet, unless he were quite close, and could feel the concussion, he could not tell a gun had been fired.

Tom the Fool had told him it was possible to know, at a great distance, that a gun had been fired, and that the knowledge came, not through the eyes or sense of touch, but through the ears. Nothing came to him through the ears. They were like fingers, they possessed feeling; nothing more.

Tom had told him the firing of a gun could be known through the ears farther off than anything else.

Accordingly, to make sure above all doubt, he had bought the gun. He had fired that gun, and his son knew he had fired that gun, although he could not know it by the sense of touch, or by the sight of smoke, for he had fired so that the boy could see no smoke. Therefore the boy got messages through his ears.

But his father had married a wife who got no messages through the ears; he had married a wife like himself in this respect; here was his boy now unlike him. His father had told him the gold could not be kept by any-

one who would send or receive news by the ears, hence he had married a wife like him, David, and he himself one like himself.

The women never knew of the gold, and could not tell anyone; his father had told him, and made him promise to marry a wife such as she that had died of the cholera, and to communicate the secret only to a son, and to a son who could neither know nor make known through the ears. Everyone else was to be kept in darkness; for if once the secret of the gold came to be known, it would be useless to them, and they would all perhaps be slain, for his own father did not know the penalty.

Now here was the traitor, come in the person of his own boy. The boy he loved with all his heart and soul. Here was a traitor in his own house; one who, as soon as he knew of the secret, would send it abroad, and betray his own father unto death.

Yes, this son, for whom he would freely have died, could not, on account of his accursed ears, help betraying his father. He would do it as a matter of certainty, as soon as he knew. Here, lying before him, was the only being on earth he cared for, and this being would hurl his own father to destruction on the very first opportunity. This boy would turn his own father off the Bishop's, tear up the Island, and give his father to the police, not because of any want of affection, but because he was cursed with ears that felt and could send messages to other ears!

Monster! Hideous, unnatural child! Mysterious curse! Away! Away! Away! There is infinite malignity of terror in your presence!

The boy's eyelids trembled. With a weary sigh he

sat up and yawned, and smiled at his father. His eyes looked a little dull. He had forgotten what had passed.

When David Lane saw the boy return to consciousness and smile upon him, the look of angry dread gave place to one of frantic yearning. It seemed as though he strove with his eyes to draw his child back into his own nature. He heart hungered to absorb him ; but he made no sign. His arms lay clasped upon his knees ; his head was thrust forward, his figure motionless ; but the agony of love betrayed was in his eyes.

There was no indignation now against his child. The worst possible certainty had been reached. If by any perversity of nature intelligible to himself he feared betrayal at the hands of his son, there might have been a struggle between indignation and love, and, for a time at least, love might have triumphed. But it was not his boy opposed him, but fate, in a form he could not understand. The son, by no fault of his own, but by the power of some curse, had been endowed by fate with an ability which he could not fail to exert for his father's destruction.

This boy, his own child, the idol of his life, his own flesh and blood, was the vessel of some spirit of wrath with power to work his destruction through mysterious and infallible agencies against which neither he nor the boy could strive with hope of success. His son was the flesh of his flesh, but the spirit of his ruin !

By this time the boy had realized all, and covered his face, and was weeping.

David Lane caught him by the shoulder and led him forth, flung the loop over the hook, and prepared the meshes for crossing the chasm. When this was done he made signs to the boy.

The latter turned pale with terror. The father repeated the signs calmly, without a trace of passion.

The boy appealed to him with outstretched hands.

Lane pointed to the mainland, and made a swift, decided gesture.

The child flung himself down moaning, and seized his father's knees and clasped them, and rested his pale tear-stained cheek against them in piteous supplication.

The deaf mute never moved. His resolution was taken inexorably. Nothing could shake him. He raised his son gently, set him on his feet, and, turning his back on him, went towards the hut. In a few minutes he came back; the boy was gone.

Raising the rope he shook it free of the hook, and the Island was cast off into isolation, and he into the rayless solitude of a life without a single love, a single hope, a single ambition, a single fear, save the one guilty one, not his own, but which seemed part of himself, born with his nature and laid upon him anew when first his father communicated the secret to him, and named the precautions and possible penalties in case of discovery.

When the rope once more hung idly down the dim deep cleft, Lane went into his own sleeping room. Something bright lying on the floor attracted his attention. He stooped and looked. It was his boy's clasp-knife. A sudden fury of sorrow seized him and shook him. His breath came short, his chest heaved, he bellowed aloud like a stricken beast. His blood-shot eyes ran fiercely round the place seeking something. Suddenly they stopped, riveted by the sight of the gun lying in a corner. He clutched it by the barrel, as though he would drive the sides together, and with a hoarse yell

dashed into the sunlight, sprang to the brink of the cliff facing the ocean, and swinging the weapon swiftly twice over his head, let it go, sending it far out into the sunlit air. With a sudden plunge it shot downward and disappeared for ever.

He looked awhile as if to give it time to reach the water, then, clutching his head in both his hands, tottered to his own chamber and threw himself heavily on the earthen floor, his arms and legs spread wide and his powerful hands digging into the hard ground until they were covered with blood.

CHAPTER XI.

A NEW FATHER.

THE little band of fishermen, led by Tom the Fool and Edward Martin, reached the prostrate form on the cliff. Edward Martin raised it, resting the child's head against his knee. Tom stooped over little Lane with a scared expression on his fat, shapeless face.

'He's not dead, Edward Martin?' demanded Tom in quavering accents.

'No, not dead; I feel his heart beating. Is there any blood on the clothes?'

While Martin was undoing the boy's collar and rubbing his hands, the men examined the child carefully.

'We can't see any blood,' replied Maurice Heffernan, son of Kitty Heffernan, a slender, tall, dark-haired, ragged, unshorn man of forty; 'and, as far as I can make out, there are no bones broken.'

The part of the downs on which they had found the boy was about a quarter of a mile from the Bishop's.

'Rub him well. Has anyone whisky?'

'Here!' cried Nat Barron, holding up a bottle in his blistered hand.

Many of the boats carried small bottles of whisky when they fished by night, to counteract the injurious morning chills. Whisky was scarce in the village, as there was no public-house. It had to be brought from Clonmore. It was seldom abused in Killard, and was regarded as medicine. But sometimes, when the men went to Clonmore, they indulged freely.

Martin poured some out of the bottle down the throat of the boy, and then watched him carefully.

'He's coming to,' whispered Heffernan, and, as he spoke, a shiver passed through the boy's limbs, and he looked up into Martin's face. Instantly he closed his eyes.

The Fool uttered a cry of joy, and, throwing himself on his knees, wrapped his arms round him.

For this child the world had hitherto been that lonely Island; the universe, the sun and moon and stars as they passed over his head; mankind, his father and the Fool, with—in the dim chambers of his early memory—the shadow of his mother. He had no knowledge, no idea of anything beyond. Sometimes he had seen men in boats beneath the cliffs; now and then people had passed by the Bishop's, and stood awhile to look at him. But those in the boats and those on the cliffs were, like his mother, insubstantial phantoms crossing before his eyes to depart for ever.

He had a clear memory of Tom and his father carrying his mother away while he was desired to remain in the

hut. His mother had never returned, and he was told she never should. The people went by and never returned, and he settled it in his mind that they never should. They were even less substantial than his mother, for he could recall touching her, and she had been tangible and warm like himself. But those passing by were mere spectres without material existence, utterly irrelevant to him.

Now, who were those that bent over him? Other fathers? for they were not like his mother. Were there really other people material and warm to the touch like his father? Would those people spurn him and send him away from them?

What strange noises they were making, like and unlike the gulls and the curlews! Tom sometimes made such noises when sitting before the fire in the hut.

'Edward Martin,' said Tom, after a pause, during which the breathing of the boy became more strong and his eyes remained closed; 'are you going to stay here all day, or is anyone going to the Bishop's to see what is wrong there?'

'Do you go on to the Island and see. Let whoever likes go with you, the child is all right.'

'But what will you do with my friend Lane's boy?'

'Could he come ashore without his father's knowledge?'

'No; the boy could not make the bridge. It takes a strong arm like Lane's to do that. You have a strong arm, Edward Martin, but you couldn't do it, for it wants a sure aim as well. You won't leave the boy here for that old she-wolf?'

'Very good; I'll take the boy home to my place, and get Mary to look after him. You and the men go and bring what news you can.'

Raising the child as lightly as though he were an infant, Edward Martin turned and strode off in the direction of Killard. The other men, following Tom, continued their way towards the Island.

The boy had closed his eyes in perplexity, not fear. He was unable to understand his new position. To be thus cared for and carried by some one he had never seen before filled his uninformed mind with wonderment.

Was this a second father, with whom his future days were to be spent? His father of the Island had banished him for ever. He was never to return. The sun was to rise and set, rise over the downs and set over the ocean, but never more was he to be on the Island.

Had this strange man an island and a hut and handlines, and would he make awful noises in the hut, and then send him forth again?

Then he began to wonder and regret.

Why had he not clung to Tom? Tom would let no one strike him. Tom brought him sweet things now and then. Why had he not appealed to Tom? The Fool had gone away. At night how should it be?

His thoughts now took another turn.

But this man who carried him was as kind as Tom or his father, only he did not press him in his arms or kiss him. Maybe this man, after all, was to be a second father. His first father had told him he could never return. He did not remember going to the Island first. Perhaps to-morrow, when he awoke, he should find himself on another island with this man for a father; and, perhaps, he should never be able to recall how he came to that second island.

Edward Martin stopped a moment, shifted his burden,

and with his hand drew the hair off the child's face as he resumed his way.

The boy opened his eyes and looked up.

Martin smiled, and patted the child's cheek with his hand.

The little fellow smiled back, and, putting his arm round the pillar-like neck of his bearer, pressed him to him.

Martin stooped and kissed the boy's forehead, and then strode on with a lighter heart.

This then was the new father. He had kissed him as the old one used long ago. Should he forget all when he awoke on this man's island to-morrow? That was now the only question.

When the fisherman reached his home he walked straight in. Mrs. Martin was busily engaged getting breakfast. She had just come back, after seeing the fish safely brought to Pat Casey's. She turned as he entered, and asked quickly:

'Well, Edward, what was the matter? Anything wrong?'

'We don't know yet. We found the boy in a faint on the downs. I carried him over; here he is,' setting him down.

The woman recoiled slightly and grew a little pale.

'David Lane's boy!' she cried, in a tone out of which she strove to keep her shrinking dislike. 'Is he hurt?' she added, keeping her eyes fixed on the uncouth child, as he stood dazed by all he saw.

'I don't think he is.'

'But — but what are you going to do with him? Wouldn't Casey's be the best place for him until the men come back? You may get into trouble over the child.'

In spite of herself, her dislike was now manifest.

'This is the best place for him. No harm can come to anyone for befriending an outcast that is without blame. I'm his godfather, and no one in the village has so good a right to do a turn for him.'

The man was impressive and stern. He knew the doubts and fears which were filling his wife's mind.

'But, Edward, don't you think—don't you believe there's something in what everyone says about the Lanes?' she asked in a pleading voice.

'I don't know what everybody says,' he replied with determination and a slight knitting of the brows.

'I mean—I mean what they say in the village. You know there's something amiss with the Lanes.'

Her voice trembled slightly. It was not often that Mrs. Martin expostulated with her husband, and now her manner was obviously one of expostulation.

'What they say in the village breaks no bones and does no harm, except to those themselves who speak ill of their neighbours. The boy is to stop here until the men come back with news; then we'll see what is to be done with him. Take the boy and wash him; he wants it badly, poor little fellow. After that we'll have breakfast. I am worn out by the night and this morning.'

'Wash him!' she cried, starting farther back. 'Wash him! Oh! Edward, how could you tell me to do such a thing? Think of our own child.'

The man frowned heavily. He was slow to lose his temper. His wife had never seen him in a rage in all her life, but something told her his anger would be terrible. He now looked as though the limit of his self-restraint had been almost reached. He struck the table

a violent blow with his clenched hand, and fixed his dark eyes upon her.

'I *am* thinking of our child. I am thinking of how I should feel if because of any foolish stories about you or me people treated our child worse than if she was a wild beast. Take the boy and remember you are a mother, and that if God sent us our child, He could take her from us. Woman! you will make me angry if you stand there longer. Take the boy and treat him as if he were one of God's people, not a serpent.'

There was a lofty magnanimity in the man's indignation, and the woman was cowed and humbled. Catching Lane's son by the hand, she led him into her own room.

When Tom and the fishermen came back, they found Martin, his wife, and little Lane at breakfast. The Fool had not been on the Island, but he had attracted Lane's attention, and exchanged signals with him from the mainland.

To Tom's questions the dumb man's answer had been that he had cast off his son for ever, and come what might the boy was never more to set foot on the Bishop's Island. Further he would tell nothing.

When Martin heard Tom's story, he beckoned to the boy, who came; and the man, placing his large, red, sinewy hand on the child's dark hair, said:

'Neighbours, going on eleven years ago, I, a stranger, came across the cliffs one night and knocked at the first house I saw a light in. I was made welcome, and those who made me welcome have never said or showed they were sorry for their goodness to me. This was the house I knocked at, and my wife was then a young girl. This boy has been cast off by his father, and he is even more helpless than I was then, for his youth is in his way. I

am the boy's godfather. I stood godfather to him the day he was born, and Father Murtagh called him John, after the favourite disciple. I will not let this house be less to him than it has been to me. I'll take the boy and do for him. From this out John Lane shall be as though he were my son. Sit you down, men; you are worn out. Sit down and have some breakfast with us.'

He placed the boy on his knee, and offered him food. Suddenly, as the man raised a mug of milk to the child's lips, a thought struck the latter. He glided from his perch, and thrusting his hand into his pocket discovered his clasp-knife was gone. He no longer felt any doubt. This was his new father. To-morrow morning he should awake on this new father's island, and, forgetful of all the past, bait his hooks and gaze at the sea, and weave patterns on the darkness with glowing faggots. In time he should get a clasp-knife exactly such as he had lost, and when many seasons had passed he should come to love this new father and this new mother too, as he had loved the old; but for to-day he should think only of the old father, and how bitter it was to be sent away.

When all this flowed upon the child's mind, he covered his face and wept.

CHAPTER XII.

HIEROGLYPHICS.

THE noon of that day was very warm, not a cloud floated between earth and heaven. The faint blue sky spread like a vast silver mist over the dreary road from Clonmore to Killard. The road was dry and sandy, few trees grew

in the shallow soil, and sheep found scanty food in the short brittle grass. Low stone fences divided vast expanses of dull green pasturage, and as far as the eye could reach no hill broke the bald monotony of the landscape.

Mr. James Heywood and Christopher Cahill, on different sides of an outside car, had passed the tenth milestone, and were drawing near the village. They had been silent for a long time, at last Cahill spoke :

'It's very hot, Mr. Heywood, but a day like this does one good.' He was trying to extract some consoling reflection from the midst of his sufferings.

'Yes, a warm day does one good, the heat opens the pores, and thus the oxygenation of the blood is facilitated.'

'Is that it?' asked Cahill, who seemed to think that opening the pores might be very agreeable to those who knew all about them and the blood; but that for ignorant men it was best to have them closed, in a cooler atmosphere.

'And,' continued the philosopher, 'when the blood is oxygenated, the spirits improve, and the fancy is quickened.'

'Ah!' breathed the young man, turning anxious eyes in the direction of the village, 'I wish we were there.'

'Nature is the wisest of mistresses; she sends the heat in summer, when the air is dry. If we had this heat in winter we should all suffer horribly.'

'I'd leave the country, for one. But that can never happen?'

'I'm not sure of that. You see, it all depends on the sun and axes. So long as things remain as they are we

are safe. But of late they are discovering, with those new powerful telescopes, such a number of new planets that the orbit of the earth may ultimately be blocked up, and we may be driven to travel by another way and at another angle.'

'Then why don't the Government forbid them finding out more planets. It seems to me like daring Providence, to be always striving to get at the works by spying into the heavens by night.'

'Government could do nothing, and discovery must go on until the end.'

'But with this steam they ought to be able to do anything. I'm told this steam is a wonderful thing. I never saw any of it, but I heard accounts of it.'

'Steam is a most wonderful thing, but quite powerless in this case. You, no doubt, believe the application of steam to be a modern invention. Nothing of the kind! It was well known to the ancient Egyptians.'

'Ah, how?'

'Yes, they were the most enlightened race at one time, and knew many things long since lost; for instance, the hieroglyphics are believed to have been familiar to them.'

'And what happened the hieroglyphics? I dare say some one or other will get hold of them some day, if we only live to see it, which I hope we may.' Mr. Cahill was straining a point to keep the philosopher in good humour.

'They have got a key to them.'

'And maybe they're the Gipsies, between them and all hurts and harms.'

'Oh dear, no! you are confounding the hieroglyphics with the lost tribes. That is a dangerous error, against

which you cannot be too guarded. The hieroglyphics were a form of secret writing—writing by pictures. When a man wanted to write down the idea sun he made a circle.'

'And when he wanted to write down the idea of a roasting sun like this, what did he do, Mr. Heywood?'

'There were, I think, no participles, either active or passive, so far as I have ever been able to ascertain, in Egyptian, for they did not speak hieroglyphics. Now this man in whom you take such a great interest, this Streets——'

'Lane, David Lane.'

'This David Lane may be said to speak hieroglyphics.'

'But you don't mean to say he's one of the lost tribes?'

'I should not care to bind myself to any theory respecting him until I see him.'

'The reference to the man of the Bishop's roused the flagging interest of Cahill; besides, they were at last getting near Killard. Cahill shook himself, wiped his forehead, and stood up to try if through the opening cleft of ground he could get one look at the blue cool sea. Just as he did so the horse shied violently and plunged forward, and before young Cahill could recover his hold or seat he was thrown flat on his back in the middle of the road.

He was quickly on his feet again; he did not feel hurt but he did feel very angry.

'Bother the brute! What did he shy at?' he cried, as he tried to shake the dust off as a dog dries his coat after a swim.

'Twas no fault of his or mine, sir, but that white paper there, just under you.'

'Hanging is too good for any blackguard that leaves paper about the roads.' He stooped, raised a small fold of paper which lay on the ground. He was in the act of tearing it furiously in two, when something on it attracted his attention, and he stopped. He opened and looked more closely at the paper, and then exclaimed:

'Well, Mr. Heywood, if this isn't a really queer thing! Here's a kind of likeness of the Island,' he turned the paper on one side, 'and a lot of something I can't make out on the other; maybe they're those things you were telling me of—look!'

Mr. Heywood took the paper, and fixing his spectacles coughed slightly as though to salute his old friends the hieroglyphics.

It required an eye almost morbidly sensitive to the features of the coast to detect any resemblance to the Bishop's in the rude sketch. There was a kind of ragged wall with an indentation, and in the indentation a perpendicular isolated mass. Beneath the wall were a few parallel serpentine lines. On the top of the isolated mass was a square space, and from the bottom of this a line reaching a short way down the mass, and ending in a black spot.

'That's the Island,' explained Cahill, pointing to the isolated mass, 'and that's the house,' pointing to the square at the top. 'I can make it all out but this—the line from the house to the spot. Maybe it's intended for the chimney, and whoever did it forgot the way that smoke mostly goes, and made it travel down, not up.'

'As to smoke, it's not necessary that it should ascend; and, indeed, it is more natural that it should descend.

But in this, as in many other things, man seems always struggling to overcome the tendencies of nature. Now, if smoke were only passed in pipes through a solution of salt and snow, it would become so dense and hard that it might be shovelled about like soot, of which it is largely composed.'

'But, sir, look at the other side. It's that bothers me entirely. Can you make anything of it?'

'It somewhat, in its lower part, resembles an alembic.'

'Does it now?' uttered as a tribute to the seer. 'And what may an alembic be, sir?'

'An astrological and chemical vessel used in distillation.'

'Is it a still you mean?' with astonishment.

'No, an alembic is not what distillers use. It is employed in laboratories.'

'And would be no way serviceable in the squeezing of a little drop of potheen?' Cahill seemed losing hold of a fascinating discovery.

'I think not. Besides, these fish are plainly intended to represent a current, and they indicate a downward current, one, I may observe, unknown in distillation; for it is usual with all volatilized liquids to rise.'

'Well, no one ever said he did make potheen. I thought, myself, at one time, maybe that was the secret, but he'd have to do something with the dew, and do that he couldn't without my knowing of it. I can't make anything of it. Could it be one of those things you were speaking of a moment ago, Mr. Heywood?'

'A hieroglyph? It may be; but I have never seen the same character before. Never.'

'And can't make out what's meant by it?'

'Not finally; but I do think it indicates distillation of

some kind, now that I look more closely; but not of whisky. It's somewhat like a sign in alchemy.'

'And what's that?'

'Alchemy was a superstitious science of the dark ages, whereby men thought to turn the baser metals into gold, and to discover the elixir of life.'

'Is it to turn iron into gold?' With profound interest the young man now regarded his companion as he put this question.

'Yes; iron, and copper, and lead, and mercury, and silver were used from time to time. But of course it was all nonsense—an ignoble superstition, nothing more. At the time it was practised, people believed it was possible to achieve success by the aid of the Evil One.'

'By the help of Darkness!' Cahill's wonder amounted almost to dismay.

'Yes. But of course that was all nonsense; the thing was never done at all.'

'Well, let us be getting on out of this blistering heat, and not waste any more time over the thing.' Young Cahill remounted at his side, and the car set off once more. 'I'll keep the paper, anyway,' he thought; 'it's no load to carry.'

'How easy 'tis to say,' he mused, as they drove along, 'that there's no sense in what people tell about Lane and Darkness. Everyone says Lane has more money than can be accounted for. Where does it come from? Where did his father get the thirty pounds he paid for the Island? Where did this man get the ten golden guineas he paid last night for that gun? Guineas! There are no guineas now; and I heard Luke Dillon say "guineas," as plain as I hear that lark singing now. "Guineas," he said:

"Ten golden guineas," while I was listening, after they went down the street toward Killard.'

With such speculations young Cahill occupied his mind until the car drew up at the door of Pat Casey's shop.

CHAPTER XIII.

CAHILL FINDS AN EMISSARY TO THE ISLAND.

THE rude drawing which had so puzzled the two men was exceedingly simple in character, although it was impossible to determine precisely what it was intended to represent. The lower portion of it resembled a water jug, the upper, the letter U inverted thus, ∩. The loop of the ∩ rested on what may be called the neck of the jug, but not quite evenly, as it touched the bend nearer to the left hand than the right bend of the letter. Notwithstanding this, the bases of the ∩ hung parallel. The sketch, a mere outline, displayed in the left hand framework of the upper portion a small object, evidently intended to stand for a fish swimming up the down stroke of the ∩. At the junction between the shaft of the thing like a water-bottle and the letter, another fish bent in the framework of the letter; and half-way down the neck of the bottle appeared a third fish, also facing down. On the highest part of the inverted letter—that is, on the outside of the curve—stood two short lines. Between these two straight lines the line of the curve was discontinued. The bases of the ∩ were open, and the top of these straight lines indicated another opening. Thus, if the design represented an alembic, there were three outlets from the body of the vessel. The fish, no doubt, showed the

course of something, but against the likelihood of this something being a gas there stood the fact of two free ends, and against the chance of its being a liquid there was the fact that the end of ascent was open like the others.

Once the mackerel had been despatched to Clonmore, the people of Killard found little to do. On this August morning the men, after breakfast, lay down to sleep. Gradually the women gathered in knots at open doors and discussed, in low tones, the wonderful news of the expulsion.

'What can have made David Lane send his boy away, he that was so fond of him by all accounts?' asked one woman.

'It's the curse,' answered another; 'what luck or grace can you expect from such people? It's the curse, my dear; and if right was only done, David Lane and all of his would be bundled out of the parish. It's in Botany Bay they ought to be, and not among honest people. All I wonder at is that the fishing keeps any good at all.'

'And then,' said another in a tone of injury, 'to think of Edward Martin taking him in, and offering to do for him, is the worst of all.'

'Yes,' cried a third excitedly; 'it wasn't bad enough to have them near us on the Island, but they must come to live among us. I for one will take good care my children have nothing to say to that boy.'

'But,' suggested Kitty Heffernan, who knew the world and had larger views than those around her, 'how do you know anything against this boy? We never heard any harm of him. And don't you know that if the man sent the boy away, suppose the man is a bad member, the boy can't be like him, for then he'd keep him. Who

knows but there's a natural Lane at last, and that's the boy?'

This speech seemed to carry much weight with the listeners; for, if they were not prepared to adopt Kitty's view, they could find no satisfactory objection to it. Seeing she had made an impression, she improved it:

'You all know now what I knew long ago, that the child is a Christian. So there's one good thing was done for him that wasn't done for his father, and 'twas Edward Martin's doings, for he went to Father Murtagh and told him what was going to happen, and Father Murtagh came. We mustn't say the boy is black until he shows his horns.'

'Take my word for it,' said the ringleader of the discontent, 'you'll see them soon enough. Mushrooms are slow to grow compared to them.'

'I'll believe well of the boy until I see them, then,' said his champion warmly.

'Did anyone see him?—anyone but the men?'

'No. None of us.'

'Here's Ellen O'Dwyer coming from the downs. Maybe she saw him.'

When the woman reached the group, she was hotly assailed with questions. As soon as there was silence, she said:

'Yes; I saw him. He's more like his mother than his father, with great big eyes and bright brown hair, and a sorrowful look for a child. But do you know what they're after finding out?'

'What?' cried several voices.

'He has his hearing, and can call like a sea-gull, and whistle like the wind in a door, and even make an offer at a skylark's song. There's for you!'

'What did I say?' shouted Kitty Heffernan triumphantly. 'He's christened, and he can hear. Maybe now you'll have a long wait for the horns, Mrs. Gorman.'

A derisive look and gesture followed these words, and there is no knowing where the discussion might have ended, but for the arrival at that moment of the outside car carrying the two travellers from Clonmore.

Christopher Cahill led the way into Pat Casey's, spoke to the proprietor, whom he knew well, and arranged that Mr. Heywood was to have the truckle-bed in the back parlour, and he himself was to sleep in the shop. He would stay one night certainly, and perhaps two.

When this was arranged, he asked Casey the news, and was told of the surprising event occupying all the tongues of Killard.

At first Cahill would not believe, later he could not. In disjointed speeches made to himself, he canvassed the occurrence, and could not, after elaborate examination, bring himself to regard the report as matter of fact.

Mr. Heywood and he strolled out, and wandered down to the beach. They crossed the sands, and, finding a sheltered nook, sat down.

For a time the talk kept as general as it was possible for any conversation with Mr. Heywood to be. The young man observed the sea was very blue under the opposite shore, and was informed that sea-water was really not blue at all, but reflected the sky, which wasn't blue either, since there was no such thing at all as colour; which information made Cahill shake his head, and say 'he was sorry for that.'

Then he said that a great number of fish were caught hereabouts, and that of them the crabs were particularly fine. Upon which he had to be corrected and told that

the learned decided against crabs being fish; and he was informed, as additional knowledge, that a cod often lays nine millions of eggs, and whales none; which caused the young man to say 'Oh!' in surprise, and look as sad as when told about the water and colour. He remarked that the rock they sat on looked very hard, and was assured that the name of it was something or other. He said, with a faint smile, that it was harder even than the rock itself, and would break it if it fell on the rock.

Mr. Heywood let him into the secret of the two Greek words from which the name of the rock was taken; and, after a long account of Athens and the Greek tongue, told Mr. Cahill, whatever might be his fate, to remain steadfast to the faith of the digamma being nothing but a breathing mark, which the red-faced young man promised to do, with a manner and look of even deeper dejection, as though he regarded anyone holding an opposite theory as nothing better than a subtle and venomous foe, against whose attacks he would do all that lay in his power, but still had not a stout heart for the struggle.

It was not, however, until the philosopher disclosed to him the fact that on every square inch of his body there rested a pressure of fourteen pounds avoirdupois, that the spirits of the young man gave way completely, and he said bitterly, as if reviling fate for all her deceits and wrongs, and the intolerable burden of air placed on ignorant men:

'Mr. Heywood, it's enough to frighten a man out of his seven senses! So it is! But, sir, I'm greatly afraid we'll have our journey for nothing.'

'I'm sure I enjoy the day very much. The sea and rocks recall to my mind many scientific facts with which I have not been dealing latterly.'

'It's a pleasure to me, sir,' said young Cahill, with melancholy humility, 'to think you like the place; and no place could be finer. But with regard to David Lane and the news we heard to-day, I'm afraid we'll have our journey for nothing. It isn't likely, is it, Mr. Heywood, that he'll come ashore soon after what happened? and as to anyone going to the Island now, that's out of the question.'

'There is something in what you say,' returned the philosopher. 'He has been a solitary man all his life; no doubt he will not care to mingle with other members of the human family peacefully; peacefully, for some time. If people tried to visit him now he might mingle with them only in a spirit of rancour, in a bellicose or warlike spirit, and this spirit in the Celt, and, indeed, in most of the Caucasian and other races, frequently leads to blows. I need scarcely tell you that a man actively engaged in physical fighting scarcely affords a good subject for philosophical examination, except so far as his strength of body and limb and his agility are concerned, upon none of which points do you, as far as I have gathered, desire my opinion. Therefore I am led to believe we shall have no opportunity of examining his idiosyncrasies during our way.'

All of which plunged the young man into profounder hopelessness. The real cause of his sadness during Mr. Heywood's discourse on colour, the rocks, the digamma, and atmospheric pressure, had been somewhat apart from the subjects. He had been almost wholly occupied with thoughts connected with his business in Killard. At first he had felt it hard that by unlucky chance he should come at so inauspicious a time.

As Mr. Heywood went on, and all semblance of reason

appeared to depart from the philosopher, Cahill began to wonder whether in any case there would be much good in confronting the deaf mute and a man who spoke fables about colour and the air, and talked so unintelligibly about rocks. If a man said that the sea wasn't blue, and that there was no such thing as blue, and this with the blue sea and blue sky before him, could it be likely he'd be able to make anything out of David Lane, who for years and years had defied the scrutiny of the shrewdest?

But wait! Didn't they say 'Set a thief to catch a thief'? Well, maybe, a man who spoke words no one could understand, and said things weren't that every one saw were, might be the best at David Lane. But then there did not remain the ghost of a chance of David Lane leaving the Island now, and there was no use in thinking any more about it. His plan had failed for the present.

When the two men got back to the village it was dark. They found supper set for them in the back parlour, and without much delay or ceremony they sat down and began to eat. When they had finished, Cahill produced his pipe and filled it. He put his hand into his pocket for some paper, and drew out the rough sketch he had found on the road. He was about to tear a piece off; suddenly he changed his mind, lit his pipe at the candle, and flattening the paper out before him, looked gloomily at it through the white tobacco smoke. While thus engaged he heard a voice in the shop, listened, and then said to his companion:

'Mr. Heywood, there's Tom outside. Would you object to my asking him in?'

'Certainly not.'

Cahill left the room, and returned with the Fool. 'Sit down, Tom, and have something to eat.'

This was an invitation Tom seldom declined; he was in the act of accepting when his eyes met the paper. He made a sudden snatch at it. Cahill angrily anticipated him, and plucked it away.

'Where did you get that? Where did you get that paper? Did the boy rob his father of it?'

'What is it to you where I got it? How dare you try to take it?' demanded Cahill sullenly.

'Because it's my friend David Lane's, and you have no right to it. Give it back to me until I bring it to its rightful owner.'

'Maybe I have as good a right to it as David Lane or anyone else.'

'You haven't! You haven't! It's his. I saw it with him often, and if you don't give it to me on the spot I'll get some one that'll make you, if I have to go to Clonmore and inform on you.'

'Very well, and I'll keep you company; and while you're telling about this paper I'll be telling how some one who has no license, bought a gun last night. Are you ready to be off?'

'Whist, your talk!' cried the Fool in consternation.

'Aren't you coming to Clonmore with me? Sergeant Murphy wouldn't mind getting up to hear two such pleasant stories.'

'Whist, I say, and don't be a fool. But the paper is Lane's, and it's no good to you. It's a likeness of his own property, and no use to anyone but the rightful owner, and, Chris Cahill, although they say things against you you're not the man to keep another man's property, and he a widower and an orphan on a desolate island.'

The young man reflected for a moment.

'Does Lane think much of the paper?'

'He wouldn't give it up for a shoal of herrings.'

'Very well, if it's any use to him he can have it by coming for it here to-morrow at eleven o'clock. This gentleman and I will be waiting for him.'

'But——'

'Oh, if that won't do I'll start for Clonmore. The evening is cool, and I know Sergeant Murphy wouldn't mind getting up to have a chat about that gun.'

'I believe all the bad that's said against you, Christie Cahill, and worse; and only for what you know I'd do my best against you.'

And shaking his fist at the young man he dashed out of the room.

CHAPTER XIV.

AFTER THE EXPULSION.

THE calm sea, the bright air, the plenteous sunshine brought no consolation to the heart of David Lane on the day he drove his son from the island. Since his earliest recollection the pageantries of nature had been familiar to his eyes. He lived among them, but they were independent of him. In his youthful manhood he had taken a wife. He had selected her from all he met by the exercise of reason, not by love or passion. In time she grew into his life; filled out and made perfect what was perfectable in his dark soul.

Then a child—a son—came, and a new feeling arose in his heart. The phenomena of external nature had, he

knew, been displayed before he was there to see. His wife had grown from infancy to childhood, from childhood to womanhood before he met her. He had acquired her as any man acquires what has been provided for him outside the range of his own eyes, and never displayed until the hour of want had come to him. Over what went on among the elements he had no control; over his wife, before he had found her, he had no control.

There was a dark and inexplorable past behind her advent. As far as his nature permitted him he had grown to love her. But she had come to him out of an uncertain, indefinite bygone, and when she died it seemed as though she had gone back to the dimness out of which she had approached.

But his son was his son. No uncertainty existed about his boy's past. He had come a tiny infant and grown into childhood under his own eyes. He himself had married in hope of having a son. The son was given to him, and hence he felt a double sense of proprietorship in the boy. When he set out inland eleven years ago to find a wife he had thought nothing of her, all of an heir for the Bishop's.

Ten years ago his hopes were realised. He had an heir; and though he was kind and tender to the woman, all the fierce love of his rugged nature clung to the boy and wound around him as the days went on. Here was this young being, his own flesh and blood, given to him that he might bring him up as he chose, teach him how to fish, how to seem to live by fishing only, and in time impart what his own father had communicated to him.

Now, after all his years of love and hope this boy turned out not to be like himself or his dead wife. Worst of all, his father had warned him that certain evil

would follow if such a child were born. If there had been but one fear, that of the secret being revealed, he could have endured betrayal, if only the doing of the treason fell not into the hands of this one being. All the world besides might conspire against him; who chose might come and find out all, yea, fling him headlong from the cliff if they would only leave him the certainty that this boy had been loyal to him. But to see in front of all his enemies the face of his child, and to feel that he had been done to ruin by a curse working in the blood of the single creature he loved, goaded him into a rage of horror and repulsion, in which no tender emotions could prevail.

On that day he paced the Island with a solemn, weary step, head sunken on chest, arms clasped behind, as though the weight of a world's sorrows were upon him. Then suddenly his manner would alter; he threw up his head, looked round defiantly as though weariness of his intolerable sufferings made him desire a circle of foes. Anon he shaded his eyes and scanned the downs narrowly from the highest point of the Island, seeming to watch for the messengers of fate. But soon his face would change to a bitter smile—the boy knew nothing the telling of which could harm. That was well!

In the afternoon he descended to the low ledge fronting the ocean and, with his face to the scorching sun, sat until the great red disc had sunk through the cloudless air into the realm of shades below the broad sad margin of the sea.

Then he arose, and with heavy faltering steps ascended the steep path. Frequently he stumbled and paused to examine the way as though it were new to him. When he reached the summit he shook himself as if he had

been sleeping, and sought to disencumber himself of heaviness. He looked at the mainland with vacant, hollow eyes, and was crossing to the hut when his foot struck something. Glancing down he saw the basket lying as it had fallen from the boy's hands. Quickening his pace he gained his own room and shut the door.

All within was unaltered. Nothing had been moved since morning, and in the dim light, which entered at the small narrow window, the table and chairs and bed lay in a brown gloom.

No food had passed his lips since morning, yet he did not seek any now. He stretched himself wearily on the bed, and covering his face for a while remained motionless.

It was dark before he stirred. With a deep worn-out sigh he got up, struck a match, and lit a candle. Putting the candle down on the table, he looked around. His eyes were fixed and staring like a sleep-walker's. There was in all his movements a vagueness which made it seem as though his sight had suffered. When he stirred he knocked up against things lying in his way; when he stretched out his hand to place the candle on the table, he miscalculated the distance, and his hand did not reach until he had made a second attempt. He looked like one losing sight, or receiving it after long deprivation of it.

All at once light, angry light, flashed into his eyes. He stooped swiftly, picked up something and held it in the dull glare of the candle.

The boy's clasp-knife!

For a moment he stood pale and furious. Through his nostrils the hot breath came and went with a loud snore. Suddenly he tore open all the blades and minia-

ture tools, and with cruel, slow deliberation bent each, one after another, on the table until it snapped and flew out of the haft. Then, holding the empty haft firmly clutched in his fist, he strode up and down, with his head thrown back, his eyes flashing and his cheeks flushed, like a wounded lion at bay.

After a while he grew more calm, and a cold, deadly look of vengeance came into his face. With a quiet, sinister smile he took a faggot from beside the fireplace, opened the door, and carrying the candle in the same hand as the faggot, and the clasp-knife in the other, went out into the dewy darkness and solemn peace of the night.

The flame of the candle bent towards him as he walked, but never flicked; there was not a breath of wind. Behind him his grotesque shadow, distorted by the inequality of the ground, leaped and shortened and lengthened. Below murmured the heavy pulses of the ocean, above the quiet stars gleamed large in the vapourous air. As he passed a night-bird flew overhead with a desolate cry.

He crossed at the seaward side of the house and went into his son's chamber. He did not seem in any hurry now, for, setting down the light, he surveyed the interior and smiled in the same cruel, deadly way.

There stood a chair at the head of the bedstead, and on this he sat down. Taking up the faggot, he opened it slowly, and when it had become a loose heap he placed it softly under the bed; unlocking his shut fist, he laid the haft of the clasp-knife slowly and gently on the bed, then paused a while and examined with malignant satisfaction what he had done.

His purpose was now clear. He was going to destroy

everything material which could remind him of his son.

He glanced round with a calculating eye. There was no woodwork employed in the construction of the room but the beams in the roof and the door and door-posts. The bed would burn swiftly and with no intense flame. The door was six feet off and the beams more than five. All this seemed to please him greatly, so greatly that some of the malignity died out of his face, and he appeared consoled by finding matters so favourable to his plan.

He drew out his pleasure by carefully removing everything else in the room to the greatest distance from the bed.

When all was ready he took up the candle. Some instinct seemed to tell him he looked pleased, for he smiled all round the dim cell as though surrounded by spectators. He could, and he would, eradicate for ever all memory of that thing, his son. He would, and he could. There was nothing easier. See, he had set all ready. There were the faggot, and the bed, and the clasp-knife all in a heap; he pointed to them as though expounding the situation. There were the chairs and stool (pointing), they could be burned in his own fire-grate when broken up. The table; that, too, would make excellent fuel, and nothing more remained. Nothing more.

He looked around to make sure.

The glass! The little piece of looking-glass against the wall.

He approached it, holding the candle high. He caught it slowly, and raised it by the bottom to take it off the nail on which it hung. He had got it only a little way

up when his hand paused, and for a moment he stood as immovable as the foundation of the Island. His own white face smiled pitilessly back to him from the blue mysterious darkness.

The last time a face had looked out of that glass it was a face not wholly unlike his own. That young face would never look out of that glass again; never look upon him again. Never, never, never! His son was gone!

As slowly as he had raised the glass he let it fall back to its old position and glanced at the bed. With tender hands he took the haft of the clasp-knife, and having rubbed it softly on his sleeve placed it under the pillow, where the boy usually kept it at night; then, setting the chair against the head of the bed, he sat down, blew out the candle, and, with arms folded across his chest, sat by the vacant bed all the night.

CHAPTER XV.

RESTITUTION.

THE dawn of the next day broke broad and pure, and a silver radiance crept over the land. A rampart of leaden clouds stood upon the western horizon, but above spread the vast expanse of intense blue.

Opposite the Island, on the downs, lay a man. He had been there all night, with his face towards the Bishop's. When the sun lifted itself above the eastern verge of the downs he rose, stretched himself, and looked sleepily around. Then he ran up and down, beating his arms on his chest to warm himself, for the air was

chilly. After a while he sat down and watched the Island intently.

For an hour he did not move out of the attitude he had assumed. His legs were crossed, his hands on his knees, and his head and neck thrust forward.

It was now broad day. The birds were floating seaward through the gentle warmth of the dewy morning. Over the grey-blue sea hung a thin veil of vapour, and through this the fishing boats were stealing towards the shore.

Still the watcher never stirred. His dull eyes remained fixed, his clumsy form rigid, and his whole soul bent on the isolated column which had been the home of the Bishop in olden times.

The boats would not be in for an hour, and it would take half-an-hour to get the fish up to the village, and no fish could reach Clonmore from Killard until three hours later. Yet the carrier was selling the fish in the market-place of Clonmore before that man altered his attitude. Then he got up, glanced uneasily at the fiery sun, wiped his forehead, and taking a large stone flung it with all his might. It rolled along the surface of the Island and suddenly disappeared.

He waited, but nothing followed. He threw another, and another, with the same result. He appeared to grow desperate, looked at the sun once more, then in the direction of the village, and finally muttered :

'He said eleven, and it must be long after ten now, and 'twill take a good half-hour to get there.'

The watcher stamped his feet and wrung his hands in despair.

Presently the head and bust of Lane rose into view.

The man on the mainland uttered a cry of joy and made rapid signs to the other.

In a listless, dull abstraction the deaf mute approached and stood on the brink confronting Tom. His eyes were vacant and bloodshot. His hair hung down in shaggy disorder about his white face. Over his bare chest his long tangled beard spread, matted and hard. He looked at the Fool, made a gesture of recognition; then he became immovable. His coat, waistcoat, and shirt were open; his shoulders drooped forward, his arms hung nervelessly by his side.

The Fool made a gesture to rouse the other's attention, but Lane did not acknowledge it.

Then Tom opened his waistcoat, held the left side in both hands, bent it backward and forward frequently, turned up the lower edge, examined the seam carefully, and finally pointed to Lane's waistcoat.

The other man followed the gestures of his friend with interest, beginning at attention, ending at fear. He rapidly subjected the left side of his own waistcoat to a similar course, and when he arrived at the seam found it open. Thrusting his hand between the lining and the cloth, he held it there a moment. His face flushed, wild baleful light shone in his eyes, and, uttering a yell, he with one hand made a fierce questioning gesture to the Fool, while holding the other parallel to the ground at the height of his son's head. 'Had his son the paper?'

'No. A low-sized man.'

'Of Killard?'

'No; Clonmore, where they bought fish and sold hooks.'

'How did the man get the paper?'

'Don't know.'

'Son had stolen and given paper to low-sized man?'

'Don't know. But come ashore. Come ashore at once. Low-sized man would restore paper if he (Lane) came to Killard; not give up paper to any one else. Come! Sun gone past where man had marked sky for meeting.'

Swiftly Lane drew up his rope bridge, and flung the loop over the iron-hook. In a minute he was in the net-work, and in less than two he stood panting beside the Fool. 'Let us run,' he signalled to his friend, and the two set off as quickly as they could go towards the village.

As he ran his thoughts were in a tumult of anger and dread. Now, had not the curse come? was it not operating already? His son, influenced by the malignant spirit inherent in him, had stolen the paper, the one only paper connected with the secret. But how had he got it? He himself did not know how long it had been out of his possession. Had the boy, while he fondled him in his arms, abstracted it at the bidding of the evil resident in his ears? Would all be known when they arrived at Killard? What form was discovery to take, marauders or police? But however discovery came, in the centre would be the boy, his son, his only child!

The last thought drove him like a goad, and he dashed fiercely forward, leaving Tom far behind. He gained the village by himself, and waited angrily for his companion to come up.

'Was the boy with the man who had the paper?'

'No. At least, not last night.'

In a few minutes the two men entered Casey's shop. Tom led the way into the back room. Here they found Cahill and Mr. Heywood waiting for them.

'Which man had the paper?'

Tom pointed to Cahill.

For an instant the mute seemed about to spring on the young man; but by a powerful effort he restrained himself, and held out his hand, peremptorily demanding the draught.

Cahill shrank from him, saying at the same time to his companion, in a tone of mingled triumph and fear, 'Now, Mr. Heywood! Now, keep your eye on this man! He's David Lane of the Bishop's.'

Lane seemed as though another moment's delay would rouse him beyond his power of restraint.

'Watch him!' cried Cahill in great excitement, 'but don't touch him. He's more dangerous than a wild beast.'

'The paper! The paper! The paper!' demanded Lane furiously.

'You'd better give it to him without any delay,' urged Tom, 'or he'll be at your throat.'

'Have you enough of him yet?' said Cahill to the philosopher.

'The time is certainly short, not above a minute, I should think. It might require more time to make a nice analysis; but for a general idea I have had sufficient opportunity.' Mr. Heywood was perfectly unmoved.

Cahill threw the draught on the table, and drew back hastily.

With a loud discordant cry, Lane seized it and thrust it into the pocket of his unbuttoned coat.

Tom interpreted, 'Where did you find it?'

'What's that to you?'

'If you do not tell where you got it, I'll break the table into staves, and kill you where you stand.'

'Leave the place. There is a curse on you and your race, and no Christian man would tell you anything.'

Tom signified the 'curse' by pointing to Lane's ears. When the father saw this all anger against Cahill died out of him. His arms fell, his head drooped, and with a heavy tread and eyes bent vacantly on the ground he strode slowly out of the room, followed by his only friend.

'The boy! The boy! The boy!' he thought. 'Yes, he was cursed in the boy. Already here was proof. His child had taken the paper, and given it to a stranger from Clonmore. The curse was on him, and vengeance was at hand, with his only child at the core.

'But still there was nothing revealed. The draught was no good without the key, and the key had never left him. Never could, until he so willed it!

'Yet, might it not be that through those ears the child could have found out the key; might have found out the secret itself? Might there not be other faculties in other men enabling them to penetrate to everything he thought securely hidden? But if all had been discovered by the boy, why did this man seek him? Why did he return the paper; and without money, too? If he had asked gold for it, the gold would have been forthcoming. No, no, all was safe.

'Would the child by-and-by, when he grew to be a man, find out all. He, himself, had not found out all until he was older than the boy. What terrible, what hideous aspect would destruction assume?

He had got out of the village by that time, his faithful friend still following. Moved by the deep dejection visible in the mute, Tom approached him and touched him softly. The other turned swiftly round, caught the

Fool by the shoulders, and shook him roughly. Surprise and grief filled the face of Tom, and he cried out, as he made signs of affectionate protest :

'What are you doing, David Lane? Is that the way you treat your only friend in all this world?'

The expression of the dull face, and the gentle absence of resentment, struck the mute. He let go his hold, patted his friend softly on the cheek, thrust some money into Tom's pocket, and making a sign that he wished to be alone, turned and resumed his way towards his desolate home.

CHAPTER XVI.

JOHN LANE LEARNS TO SPEAK.

THE morning following his expulsion John Lane awoke before anyone in the house was stirring. A bed had been arranged for him in the second sleeping room. In the other slept the fisherman's wife, and in a small hooded cot their little daughter Mary. Martin was out with the boats. The boy looked around in great surprise. No alteration had taken place during the night. The furniture of the room had not been disturbed. He arose and went to the window. The houses of the village spread beneath him, and already people were abroad. How was all this? No new island ; no new room !

He put on his clothes dreamily. When he had finished dressing he tried all his pockets. The clasp-knife was still missing. How was all this? His old notion of what would happen had halted. Things seemed to be as they had been when he went to sleep.

This was discouraging, sickening. Oh ! when would

the change come? When should all be as it had been; all that had been, forgotten? He had no memory of arriving at the Island, but he remembered coming here. Was he never to forget? Was he ever to live here? Hateful thought! Was he to remain in that room always? He saw a door, but he durst not open it. He feared too much to know further. Perhaps if he remained quiet he should fall asleep again, and in that sleep the old order might be restored.

He crept back to bed, covered his head with the clothes, and lay still.

In time Mrs. Martin was stirring. She had to meet her husband on the beach. When she was ready to go, she cast a tender look at the little cot where her child was sleeping, left the bedroom-door an inch ajar, and went out, after glancing with great dissatisfaction at the door of the room occupied by the boy. Her dislike to him had increased rather than diminished. Except at night, the outer door of the house always remained on the latch.

The breakfast things lay ready on the square table of plain deal. Over the turf burning on the hearth in the huge chimney-place hung a metal kettle, and upon a rush-mat in front of the fire slept a large, round-headed, thick-limbed yellow cat.

The shutting of the outer door roused the cat. He got up, shook himself, blinked aimlessly around, shook himself again, and then submitted the whole room to a critical examination. Apparently the examination afforded him little satisfaction, for once again shaking himself and sneezing in protest, he looked long and carefully at the door of the room from which Mrs. Martin had issued. Once more stretching himself, he proceeded, with the elaborate caution of a conspirator who doubted the

strength of his plot, to approach the slightly open door. As soon as he reached it all faith in his plot seemed to desert him. He abandoned his tactics of secrecy, uttered a low, soft cry, and pushing the door in with his nose, entered the room where little Mary was sleeping. Here he assumed a bold and resolute attitude, as though he set fate at defiance, and purring, jumped on the cot and boldly thrust his face against the face of the sleeping child.

With a cry the child awoke, and discovering her favourite playfellow, whose rough salute she sleepily resented, called out in a sweet, fresh voice, full of gentle expostulation, 'There, Jos! Go away, Jos! I don't want you, Jos!' pushing the cat from her all the time with both her rosy hands.

But Jos had too great a dislike to solitude to be defeated. He slipped through the young, soft hands, and once more thrust his cold nose and hairy whiskers against her delicate, blooming face.

With a loud, long laugh, that sounded like a cascade of water falling through silver wires, the little girl sprang up into a sitting posture, throwing back with one hand her rich auburn hair from her white forehead and throat, and with the other hand soothing the purring intruder.

'Go away, sir. Go away now, sir, and I'll get up and nurse you at the fire, if you're good.'

She had sprung out of bed and danced to the door, and stood holding it open for Jos.

With the dignity of triumph in his gait and with erect tail, the cat stalked slowly from the room and took up his old position on the mat. He had unshaken faith in his plans now. He knew by experience that in a few minutes that door would re-open and his little mistress come forth

and take him to her lap, and, perhaps, give him some milk. If the truth must be told, his manifestation of doubts and fears were a mere device to deceive spectators, of which there were none, if tables and chairs and stools be not looked upon as such. Who can tell what they seemed to Jos's green eyes? In many of this cat's ways there was a dark and tortuous subtlety which would have led a thoughtful observer to doubt him, particularly as he was still quite young.

To show his complete reliance on his scheme, he sat with his back to the door, and proceeded to make a somewhat elaborate toilet on his face, keeping his eyes as carefully shut as a child who has had bitter experience of soap. To anyone knowing the present position of affairs, and seeing him that morning, it would have been plain he paid unnecessary attention to his ears, evidently with the design of keeping himself as much as possible in ignorance of what might occur in his rear. And yet, notwithstanding all this duplicity, the cat was sound at the core.

The door opened at length, and Mary stepped into the bright, sunlit room. She wore a light blue frock, white stockings, and black boots. Her little plump arms were bare from the elbows, and her frock did not close at the neck, but was open from the shoulders upward. The arrangement of her hair showed the hand of an amateur. In front there was an attempt at order, but behind it hung in a loose, wilful tangle of radiant chestnut over her white neck.

A slight shudder passed through the cat as he heard the door open and the patter of the small feet; otherwise he gave no sign, but went on washing his face.

'You're a bad, nasty Jos to wake me; and I won't have it, sir.' The voice made very pleasant music in the silence of that bright room.

Jos's ears seemed to give him more trouble than ever this morning.

'Do you hear me, sir?' with a stamp of the tiny foot.

Jos switched his tail once hastily, as if angry thoughts were arising in his mind respecting the difficulty experienced with his ears to-day.

'And I won't give you any milk this morning.'

Jos stopped, opened his eyes, looked sharply into the fire as though it were a glass and he felt anxious to see what progress he was making. Then, as if he had detected some defect, he shut up his eyes quickly, and resumed his work more energetically than ever.

Drawing a stool to the hearth, his little mistress sat down and regarded the criminal severely.

All at once Jos stopped and looked up. There was in his glance and manner an aspect of memory dimly illumined. It seemed as though he could get no further than a vague idea he had met her somewhere before. He assumed an air of candid inquiry and examined her minutely, whisked his tail once in token that he gave it up, and began slowly and solemnly to raise his paw as if to finish his washing.

The cold-blooded duplicity of the beast smote the heart of the little maiden keenly. She could bear to be awakened by a tyrant cat, but she could not endure to be forgotten. The girl is mother to the woman, as the boy is father to the man; and, as there is scarcely anything a woman cannot forgive in those she loves except indifference, Mary could no longer allow the cold feeling of this cat's forgetfulness or carelessness to dwell in her warm little bosom.

'Jos,' she cried affectionately, pleadingly, 'my own dear Jos, I was only joking. Come!'

With a sound, half purr, half mew, the great yellow cat sprang into her open arms, and nestled and rubbed himself against her with every show of love. She bent over him and kissed him and stroked him, murmuring all the pretty things she could think of, and as she did so the outer door opened, and Father Murtagh entered.

The child rose, placed the cat on the floor, and stood calmly regarding the priest.

'Good-morning, Mary. You are up very early, my child. I see you are at your old work of nursing poor Jos. Where is your mother?'

'Gone to meet father, sir.'

Years had dealt severely with Father Murtagh. There were streaks of silver in his hair. The furrows in his cheek had deepened into sharpness. His shoulders were rounded and drooped permanently, and his hollow temples showed a network of creases and dull blue veins.

No time of all the year soothed the wearing troubles of his mind so much as those calm, clear summer mornings, and he was always abroad at such times before the people of the village were awake. The even sunlight, the sweet moist air, the expanse of tranquil sea beguiled his soul of much of its pain. They seemed to reimpose on earth primeval purity and beauty. It was for a while possible to forget that sin had ever darkened earth and clouded Heaven. The mellow healthfulness of morning appeared inconsistent with the need for that great Sacrifice. Man could not have broken the covenant and be permitted to dwell in such holiness of peace in nature. The favour of the elements read like a promise of divine mercy reaching backward and forward, throughout all time. And although often afterwards this man questioned his right to draw consolation from mere material manifestations, he

could not resist the temptation to go forth and taste a brief respite.

'Will your father and mother be back soon, Mary?' he asked tenderly. How his heart yearned over children! They were the most perfect things left us out of the ruin of God's great plan.

'Oh, yes, sir; she'll be back soon, for the kettle is boiling.'

'And is that your clock, little Mary?' he said with a faint smile.

'Yes, sir; she and father always come soon after the kettle begins to boil. Don't they, Jos?'

Jos, sitting sullenly on the mat, when he heard himself appealed to, winked both his eyes as though in satisfaction for his deposition from his mistress's lap he had sworn an oath of Carthusian silence, no matter how much he might know.

'Very well, Mary. I'll take a chair and wait.'

She felt bound to display hospitality after the manner of her mother, and made a meritorious but futile effort to dust the chair with her frock in lieu of apron; but by no means at her disposal could she succeed in getting at more than an inch of the seat of the chair.

'I'm not big enough, sir,' she said ruefully. 'But some other morning, when I'm big, you'll come—won't you, sir?'

'Perhaps, my dear child. Perhaps.' He patted her disordered hair and sat down.

'But, indeed, when I'm big, I'll do it like mother. I know how. *Won't* you come?'

'If I can, my child. If I can you may be sure I will.' He had not been thinking of her willingness to do him the service; but he had been wondering where he should be

when she was 'big.' 'How beautiful,' he thought while the child had been speaking, 'are some of the qualities of our fallen nature. Here is the spirit of charity in this little child. When she is grown up how will it be with her? Will she be like her mother, as good and full of faith as we can expect to find here below; or will shebe froward, and raise her eyes carelessly to Heaven?'

'Father often sits like that,' broke in the little maid quite freely. She had no awe of him.

'Like what?' he asked with a start.

'Asleep with his eyes open.'

'I wasn't asleep, my dear. I was only thinking.'

'Then I wish father wouldn't think. It frightens me.'

'And it frightens me, too,' thought the priest with a shudder.

After some time he said, 'But, Mary, you are not all alone in the house? Isn't someone staying here?'

'Oh, yes, sir; John Lane. Father brought him here yesterday, and mother put him to sleep in the other room, and he can't speak, but can whistle like birds and make noises like the wind.'

The tiny speaker seemed much impressed with the wonderfulness of all this, and, as she spoke, stared with her round blue eyes at the clergyman.

His mind wandered from her 'Oh, yes,' to the end of her hurried speech, and again he fell into a reverie. 'A noble man this Edward Martin! A noble Christian man! He seems to have wandered out of the Old Testament into our days. A man far above his position; yea, and his times. A man of inexhaustible magnanimity, gentle to all around him, stern to himself. No other man in the village would take that child, that forlorn outcast, across his threshold. Alas! what must man have been

in his perfect state, if such virtue survives? Not another man in all Killard would take that boy, even for my asking; but this brave man volunteers. Volunteers in such a cause on earth must surely be high among the chosen bands hereafter. He is far more fit to bear my responsibilities than I am. He sees with an unerring eye, and acts with an unerring hand, when I, with all my training in thought and discipline of spirit, hesitate and falter. I do not murmur at the weight of the burden for my own sake, but for others. Oh! if it should be that others through my unworthy lassitude or feebleness of purpose suffer, how terrible! That will be my never-ending torture to see them; my eternal agony to know that they are banished for ever because I did not make them loyal subjects of the Lord!'

The cold sweat gathered on his dull grey forehead and rolled down his cheeks. His mouth was partly open, his eyes fixed and scared, as though he were already gazing on the terrible picture he had conjured up; his emaciated, nervous hands clutched and crushed one another convulsively.

At last the child screamed and ran away to her room. He looked up, shook himself, and with his hand brushed away the drops hanging from his eyebrows, and uttered a long, low sigh, half wail. Then recollecting where he sat, he called to her in a soft, sad voice:

'Mary! Come to me, my dear. Don't be afraid of me. I was only thinking that was all. I will do you no harm, and I am not unwell.'

She did not approach, but stood holding the door and staring with round frightened eyes. 'What made you cry?'

'Did I cry, my child? I did not know it.'

'Look! the tears are on your cheek still; wipe them away, you frighten me. There is another tear on your other cheek.'

'Tears,' he thought. 'No tears. We may weep our little griefs away, but our woes must come through the pores. I have scared the little one.' Then aloud, 'Come to me. Come to me; I'll not weep again. Come, little Mary; I'll tell you what brought me here. I want to see the little boy.'

'He's a big boy,' interrupted Mary indignantly, as if the family credit had been assailed.

'Well; the big boy. I'll go call him, If it's time for little girls I am sure it's time for *big* boys to be up.' He laid a playful emphasis on the adjective, and went towards the closed door; opened it, and entered.

The boy had not stirred. Gently drawing down the clothes, Father Murtagh found him lying on his face fully dressed.

With a tender touch he raised young Lane, and led him into the outer room, and set him down on one of the chests in the chimney-place and stood over him.

The wondering eyes of the boy explored the new strange figure in hope of finding some likeness to what he wished for. Then sighing he dropped his glance, and gazed into the smouldering fire. He had no fear of strangers. He had known no feeling of fear in all his life, until the manner of his father grew unfamiliar and suspicious. His father's treatment had shocked and terrified him, but even now, in the absence of absolute gestures of repulsion, he would have run to his father and clung to him.

Those new beings seemed to have no relevance to him or to his case. They were only the necessary intermediate phantoms between him and his new home. By-and-by

they would fade away, and be no more remembered by him than what had occurred before his first coming to the Island.

The only one who roused a trace of curiosity was little Mary. He had now and again seen full-grown men and women pass by the Island, never any one like her. She was smaller than he, and had bright warm hair like sandstone wet with sea-water in the sun. His memory of his mother was so dim and misty, that for aught he could imagine or remember, Mrs. Martin might be she. But this lesser mother, this being smaller than himself, with such different hair and eyes, what was she? His own hair came no further than his neck, but hers hung down her back like sea-weed in the washing of the tide. He had a strong dislike to touching those new beings. There seemed in doing so a certain disloyalty to his father. He took no further notice of the priest or the little girl, but sat sadly by the fire awaiting the transformation scene of his destiny.

The priest had carefully observed young Lane, and as he stood over the bent figure, and little Mary took up Jos and sat in silence, he thought:

'So far he is rescued from the evil influence of his unchristian father. So far we are approaching good. He has already, I thank God devoutly, been marked as one of the followers. Pledges have been made for his adopting the track. Now arises the duty of seeing that he treads the way. He appears gentle and docile. I pray he may prove ductile. I pray with all my soul, with all the entreaty of humble worship, that the evil of his race may cease here, and the new man be at hand. He can hear.

'The infliction under which his father labours does not

descend upon him. Heaven grant this prove a sign that the greater infliction of want of faith may not descend upon him! By-and-by he will learn to speak. He shall be taught the Great Name. He shall be instructed in the way of communicating with the Most High, and he shall be made to plead day and night that his unhappy father may be drawn out of his darkness into the light of faith. O God, grant that the prayers of the child may avail for the father. Amen.'

'Here they are, sir!' cried Mary, starting up and running off to the door.

In a few seconds Edward Martin and his wife were bowing to Father Murtagh. The woman raised the daughter for her father's kiss. He then went over, and, putting one hand on the outcast's shoulder, stroked the boy's dark hair with the other. The woman gathered her own child closely to her breast, regarded her husband's action with disquieted eyes, and thought:

'A boy! a boy! Oh, if it had only pleased Heaven to send me a boy, too! Men may love their girls, but they are proud of their boys. Oh, what would I not give that such an one were mine! Is this boy to be for ever in the house? Am I always to be thinking "I have no boy?"'

'Edward Martin,' said the priest solemnly, 'you have done well to take this child, and as you answer for his worldly necessities, I will look to his spiritual requirements, as far as it is given me to do; and, moreover, should he prove capable of taking in worldly knowledge, I shall see to him; for it is but fit he, who by infinite mercy has been delivered out of bondage and placed in our hands, should have the best that we can give, not so much out of regard to him, as in gratitude to God, who

has been pleased to favour us with such a charge. This is what I have come to say.'

He held out his hand as he spoke. Martin took it cordially, without any show of modesty or embarrassment. He stood in fear of no man, but he respected all. He considered every man as a complete and independent being responsible to himself for all he did, and unjustified in seeking excuse for lapses in duty at the charge of others. He looked on conscience as the tribunal for all acts; and mere worldly honours or distinctions seemed to him no more than sky or sea, things wherein he had no interference, and which were for the uses of those who enjoyed them, lending neither importance nor majesty. There was no one in the parish showed less exceptional respect to Father Murtagh; but then no one showed so much respect to each one of his neighbours without distinction.

'We're all the same,' he would say. 'Where is the difference between us? I don't know but the man who seems worst, may be better than the man who seems best; such matters, when they don't affect me, are no part of my business, but each man's own.'

On the evening of that day, Edward Martin went to sea as usual; his wife had to go down to the village, and the two children were left awhile together. When she returned, she found John Lane sitting on a chair at the open door, and little Mary on a stool at his feet. A cloud passed over the face of the mother. The intruder had dissipated the likeness of home, and was a cold and forbidding impertinence. Her daughter ran eagerly towards her, and catching her by the skirt cried in loud, happy, cheerful voice:

'Oh, mother; come, come!' dragging her in the direction of the boy.

For a moment the little maiden looked out of her bright, joyous blue eyes at his sombre face, and then, pointing to herself, said, 'Who's this?'

'Mayee.'

The mother started back and gazed in terror awhile at him, then catching her own child in her arms she shook her, and pressed her almost savagely in her arms, to the astonishment of the girl, who began to whimper at the rough treatment and ungentle looks.

'Who taught him that? What villain taught this child of darkness my child's name for a first word? Who? tell me!'

'I,' murmured Mary, between sobs.

'You! you! you!' The woman seemed half frantic with superstitious terrors. 'How dare you, miss! How dare you, you bad child! Oh! misfortune on the day that brought him to my house, to be under the same roof with my child. Edward Martin, if evil comes of this, how will you answer me?'

'Mayee,' repeated the boy, looking up with some slight awakening of interest. These people were becoming less shadowy to him by this time.

At the repetition of the strange, thin, unfamiliar sound mocking her child's name, the woman sprang back and glared at him in an affrighted agony. The little girl now cried out, and sobbed and wailed.

The crying of the little girl struck a chord in the boy's slumbering mind. It seemed somewhat analogous to his own case; the big woman was making the little woman cry; his big father had made him cry. He stretched out his hands as though he would take the child.

With a shriek Mrs. Martin sprang past him, and rushing into the house put her weeping daughter into the

sleeping-room, fastened the door, and stood sentinel on the outside, gasping,

'Take my own child out of my own arms! He must go to-morrow; he or I.'

PART II.

THE WHIMS OF PLUTUS.

CHAPTER I.

THE LOST MARY.

'Ah, yes! Ah, yes! It is a good while ago. Let me see; let me see. How long? Was it not the year I came to Clonmore?'

'Yes, sir, the very year. You may remember I was crossing over the bridge and found you standing here, and we had a talk about the matter, and you told me a lot of learned things about what water might do to the human mind.'

'Did I?' in a tone indicating pleasure at the thought of finding his past learned self confirmed by history. It was not easy to see the features of either clearly, for it was a heavy summer night. Below the bridge of Clonmore the plain lay wrapt in a dim warm mist; overhead the stars blazed in the moist air; and from the abutments of the bridge and the shores of the river rose a thin murmur of whispering, like hushed voices of children.

'And you may remember we walked home together, and saw Lane and the Fool, and the next day we went over and you met David Lane and Tom, and I gave the dummy the paper I found on the road.'

'Right, quite right! I remember it all.' Yet still something in his voice seemed to indicate that he preferred to have it recollected for him. The memory of the philosopher had begun to fail. His voice was not querulous, but just a little uneasy, as though this weakness of memory, now familiar to him, hinted at a dark problem to be solved only in one way.

'You may recollect you could make nothing out of the dummy, and less out of the Fool.'

'There I fear you are in error. We cannot conceive anything less than nothing; and I'm sure that, even though my faculties were not then as matured as they now are, I could scarcely have fallen into the error of declaring one set of discoveries to be inferior to nothing.'

With memory there seemed to have been weakened the easy confidence of years ago. Trouble now underlay his voice when he spoke so certainly of that visit to Killard, and he alluded to the maturing of his faculties rather as if he were protesting or praying against some mute denier of his words than spontaneously uttering uncontrovertable matter.

'I don't say you said those words exactly.'

'Ha!' with a tone of triumph and great relief. I thought not. Nothing could induce me *now* to say anything so monstrously absurd, and I do think even then—how long ago did you say it was?'

It was this summer six years.'

Well, I do think I could not have used language so loosely *even then*.'

The tone of triumph had increased, and to judge by his voice the old man's face must have been radiant when he uttered the emphatic *now* and *even then.*

'I ask your pardon, sir, if I have done amiss. I had no harm in what I said. I thought that learning could do almost anything; and a simple man like me often talks of "less than nothing;" it looks only natural that one of your great knowledge could talk of it as well. I must have forgotten your words.'

'Do not trouble yourself further about the matter, my dear Mr. Cahill, but allow me to set you right on one point; we can never forget anything. We may cease to revive a fact of long ago, but we cannot forget it. The fact is stored up somewhere in the mind.'

'Ah now?'

'Yes; stored up somewhere in the mind——

He paused. His voice had grown low and tender as if he were sadly recalling something to his recollection. When he spoke again his accents trembled and something bright like a star sparkled on either cheek in the faint silver light.

'Do you think I could ever forget I once had a daughter?'

'A daughter!' cried Cahill in astonishment, turning towards his companion. 'Why, I did not know you were ever married, Mr. Heywood.'

'She wasn't exactly my own daughter, but the orphan of my only sister. When my sister died I took the child to live with me; that is now a long time ago—in my better days.'

He sighed, and leaned against the parapet of the bridge.

Cahill drew near.

'Is she long dead?'

'Yes, a long, long while; years before I left Limerick. She was a most sweet and intelligent child. When first she came to stay with me I found she knew not a word of any language but her own—I mean English; and I assure you in less than a year she had acquired a very respectable stock of Latin, German, Italian, French, together with the rudiments of natural philosophy, and she was about to enter on theology and metaphysics, when—when I lost her!'

He waited to steady his voice, which had become most unphilosophically shaken.

'I taught her no Greek, because, as it is with all children, she needed correction now and then, and when she did anything displeasing to me I always chid her in Greek. That put my conscience at rest, and never disturbed her gaiety or smiles.'

'And how did she die?'

There was a touch of human sympathy in Cahill's voice.

'The doctors killed her. She fell ill of a disease which it is unnecessary to particularize to you, as you have not read physic. I had made that particular disease a favourite study. In the pages of my "Galen" you might have seen a thousand references respecting this complaint. Well, no sooner were the doctors in the house than they would not listen to my suggestion of treatment. I made a philter—with my own hands I made it—and brought it to the room, but they forbade me to administer it; turned me from the place, and would not allow me to re-enter. In a week my child was dead.'

'Oh, the villains!'

'Yes, she lay slain with their new-fangled ways and upstart theories. When they came and told me she was dead, I struck at them with all my might'—he raised his thin weak arm and shook it feebly over the whispering river—'but they, cowards as they were, never offered to strike me back, but held me until men were sent for, and these men remained with me night and day until—until—we buried her, my child!'

His voice had completely deserted him, and the tears slipped quickly one after another down his dimly visible cheek. Suddenly he waved his hand angrily over the river, crying out in a choked voice:

'Why didn't they strike me back like men? They had murdered my little Mary, why could they not do likewise with me?'

'And was her name Mary, Mr. Heywood?'

The dead child's name on the lips of another acted like a charm, and his anger died out of him.

'Yes, her name was Mary. I do not often speak of her, it disturbs—it disturbs my mind, and the mind of a philosopher should be always calm. She died when she was just twelve; she had chestnut-coloured hair and bright blue eyes, and a forehead like a lily, and white teeth between red lips. I often look at children when I meet them, hoping to find some one like her, but not one of all I have seen resembled her in the least. She was sturdy and light of heart, mark you, and often grieved me with her wilfulness so much that for a while I used to feel sorry she did not know Greek.'

'Poor child! I feel for you. And you never saw any little girl like her; and if you did you'd feel a bit as if she wasn't dead, only maybe gone away to live with some other relation.'

'I do not think it would be just to my reason to allow myself to indulge in such a delusion, but there could be no harm in my looking at the child and believing I saw a portrait, an animated likeness.'

'I know a child very like the one you speak of, both in her looks and ways.'

'Ah!' sighed the old man, his interest gone.

'Maybe you wouldn't object to another drive to Killard with me, Mr. Heywood? I'm going over some day this week, and the air would do you good and cheer your heart of its sorrow. Will you come?'

'Where did you say you were going?'

He had not been listening to Cahill's voice; the shrill murmur of the stream beneath had been harping to his fancy, and he was beguiled of the present, and listening to heart-echoes of the childish voice hushed for ever.

'To Killard,' answered Cahill.

'On the sea?'

'Yes.'

'I have been there, have I not?'

'Oh, yes; many times! and once with me, you remember, six years ago.'

'Of course I do. It was freezing bitterly.'

'No, in summer;—a hot day in summer.'

'Ah, so it was. I am so deeply plunged in speculation sometimes, that matters of present or personal fact get cloudy.' All visible fact must then have been very misty to his sight, for once more the tears were slowly toiling down his cheek.

'But, Mr. Heywood, won't you come with me to Killard some day this week?'

'Yes.'

The old philosopher turned away, and dropping his chin upon his chest, walked slowly towards the town.

'If he only takes an interest in her it may be useful to me,' mused Cahill as he refilled his pipe and sat upon the parapet to think. 'And I'll risk the other thing, whatever may come of it,' he mentally added, after long thought.

CHAPTER II.

THE HEREDITARY TAINT.

DURING the six years John Lane had grown into a tall, long-limbed, awkward lad. He had learned to speak both Irish and English, but there was a peculiar rugged depth in his voice which sounded startling to strange ears. The words seemed propelled forcibly from a lower portion of the throat than ordinary, and often when he was excited they rushed in such a rapid torrent as to confuse one another. He had also a way of using words in unfamiliar contexts, so that often the simple fishermen were at a loss for his meaning. In action he was abrupt and decisive, rarely condescending to argue, and still more seldom altering his opinions.

The priest had taken a particular and lively interest in him, and when the boy could be spared from his duties in the boats Father Murtagh instructed him in the elements of education, teaching him to read and write and use figures. He found young Lane eager to learn, extraordinarily apt, and with a grasp of mind and power far beyond his years.

The priest had often said to Edward Martin,

'John Lane is a man in thought. When the infliction was removed from his race there seems to have rushed in a wonderful mental force, governed by enormous activity of intellect. My only fear is that the boy may not to the end be guided by justice under religion.' To which Martin would reply quietly, 'We must only hope for the best and do our best for him,' and this smote the priest like a reproach for want of faith in Providence.

Among the fishermen John was retiring and unsociable. He rarely spoke beyond the requirements of business. None of the other lads of the village could call him companion; he gave confidence to no one. The people looked on him with fear, not unmingled with respect. They never took any familiarities with him, and he had never been known to laugh. In fair or foul weather he was always the same at sea, silent, attentive to the work in hand and full of expedients and resources in emergencies. He seemed to regard the ocean as a thing with so many means of destruction; in storms he was as cool and collected as in sunshine. He had often been out in great gales when life hung in the balance, yet no man had ever seen him quail where others were unnerved by fear. This was not so much the result of active courage as indifference. He would have been quite unappalled by the knowledge of approaching death, for he was somewhat of a fatalist, but inside his fatalism lay a principle that it was equally designed he should offer all the powers of his mind and body against attack or seeming danger. It was in a great measure owing to his self-possession and readiness that the fishermen looked on him with respect.

In the house he was different in many particulars.

Speaking still very little, except when addressed, his manner was absent and distracted. Often, for hours, he seemed quite unconscious of his surroundings ; and when roused he took some time to realize the nature of any demand made upon him.

Mrs. Martin's original repulsion had passed away, to be succeeded by a vague feeling of pity, mingled with awe. She still believed a shadow from his race hung over him, but she looked upon him now rather as the sport of evil destiny than a positive factor in evil itself. Towards her he was always gentle and submissive, showing more animation when she spoke than at any other time, and always displaying a willingness to do any little service she required.

Between him and Edward Martin the feeling was not so well defined. Martin treated him with the solemn kindness he showed to all, and the lad, although never murmuring against the word of Martin, often half revealed a spirit of revolt. Little Mary regarded him as the most wonderful being in all the world. She loved to sit by him, no matter how dark or sullen he might be. She waited for his coming as the great event of the day ; set his chair for him at the table, arranged his cup, plate, knife and fork, and treasured up all the good words she heard of him. But she was so unlike him, and she so plagued him with her wilful, passionate ways that she had roused a feeling very like hatred against her in his heart. He could scarcely endure her ceaseless questions, her endless prattle, her wild rompings, and most of all he resented the easy familiarity with which she treated him. All others stood more or less aloof from him ; but this child, though believing his like did not exist, pulled him about and played tricks with him, and

made fun of his shyness, so that often he found it impossible to bear the house, and he went out. On more than one occasion she had so provoked him that he had seized her by the shoulders and shaken her until she cried.

To a close observer the most prominent characteristic of young Lane's social view would have appeared an absence of vulgarity. There was nothing common or mean or low about his dealings with those around him. His temper could not be relied on, but there was no smallness about the boy. It may be that continually confronting nature in her simpler and sublimer form lifts the mind above petty matters of social intercourse or detail; for certain, people who dwell by the sea are more straightforward and guileless than their brethren inland. They do not fill up so much time with idle talk; the waters are incessantly speaking, and there is an unobserved disinclination to break in upon the inarticulate soliloquy of the waves. Then again, these people by the waters have usually some interest in men who sail the sea. The risk to friend or relative, and the vast vague uncertainty beyond the meeting of sky and water at the horizon, set a grave grand background to life, against which it is impossible to take so vivid an interest in trifles as in a town, that magazine of trifles, or in a valley, where your neighbour's land seems to lean upon yours and compress it. But on the sea no one is king. No routine prevails. No social distinction is visible when men curse or pray as they lash themselves to masts and spars. No neighbour disputes a right of way. There are no hedges, no claims for trespass, no challenge, 'Who goes there?' steer what way you will. To be a sailor is to be a cosmopolitan. That slender

web of humanity binding the remotest harbours of the world together is the best knit of all human webs. It is composed of men from every nation, creed, and moral code; all are bound in a universal brotherhood, inhabitants of one gigantic continent, the countries of which are oceans vaster than any spaces of land. Sailors are the people of an old world sunken beneath the waters, and they float over their submerged country, now and then visiting places of risen land where a race distinct from them dwells. Many sink down the blind green abyss to their ancient homes, to lie at rest among the bones of others of their race.

For young Lane there were other influences than that of the proximate sea to shield him from littlenesses. It is through our eyes we are ennobled chiefly, and through our ears defiled. The visible good of God shines in His works, and invites the spirit to rejoice and worship. The aggregate evil of all time is stored up in words and enters by the ears. If man has to be trained into goodness, he has also to be educated into badness No one man could invent all the evil of which an average man knows. It took generations of perverted effort to refine evil and give us the system we now possess. Man is by nature almost a brute; by education he is taught hypocrisy enough to conceal the natural violence of the brute in him; by Christianity he is informed that he must eradicate the brute altogether, cast out of his nature all selfish personality, live with others as though they were he, ever keeping his eyes lifted to the Supreme Fountain of all. In the blind and deaf savage you find a being little above the beast, but having some faint ray of undefined aspiration. Open his eyes and set him among his fellows, and he cannot but feel the ray strengthening. Let him live

his life thus, and he will be little worse than a beast with a dim ray. But open his ears and allow him to hear his fellows speak and pour all their lore into his mind, and you have a creature a little above a beast, with a dim ray and the accumulated evil knowledge of a thousand years revealed to his reason. Brutes are mere brutes, and build up wilfully no precedents of wrong. Brutes do not regard the fights of other brutes with pleasure. It must be men and women who sit on the benches of the Colosseum. The male hyæna does not ill-use the female; you must come to man before you can find the male striking his mate.

In his childhood, up to his tenth year, John Lane had heard Tom the Fool mutter words, but they had no more meaning for his ears than the curlew's call. When he did come to learn the meaning of sounds, his mind was fresh and untroubled with infantile values or ignoble associations of words, and he heard them used by Edward Martin, a man too calm and just and dignified to tolerate a meanness or vulgarism in his presence.

No sooner was John Lane able to read than he became a devourer of all books he could lay hands on. There were few, indeed, among the villagers, for Killard had no school, nor was there one nearer than Clonmore, and the people were almost wholly ignorant of letters. But Father Murtagh had a small stock, a few hundred volumes, and these he made free to the boy. The library of the priest consisted chiefly of theological works, but there were a few by profane authors both in the classic and English languages.

The boy quickly ran through the more accessible store, and then one evening when he called at Father Murtagh's and discovered he had read all the English essays, his-

tories, voyages and travels, poetry and science, said with something like timidity in his tones:

'Father Murtagh, can one see the pictures in Latin books without a guide?'

'My child, there are few classical books illustrated, and I have not a single one with anything more than maps.'

'Oh, sir! I don't mean painted pictures, but the pictures in the words. When I read I do not see the books, but the pictures the men who wrote these books saw.'

'The boy has imagination,' thought the priest. 'Heaven grant it lead him not wide of the fold or into sin!' And then he replied, 'One could learn, but it is not easy. You have studied a little English grammar?'

'Yes. I read all the books I borrowed, and the grammar twice, as you recommended.'

'Well, that may help. Do you wish to begin Latin?'

'If I could, without troubling you. I have no more books in English to read. I should like to see what those Latin men have to show.'

Father Murtagh gave him a Latin grammar and instructions, and the boy left. It was winter, and he had almost all the long nights for study. In two weeks he had committed the little book to memory, and came to the priest to return it.

'Have you read it?' demanded the old man. 'Do you feel discouraged?'

'I know it. I have put it all in rows in different places, and I can find what I want at any moment.'

'You have copied it out?' asked the priest, a little puzzled.

'No; not in ink. I always put what I read in cer-

tain places, and then I can come and see it whenever I like.'

This made the matter no clearer to the priest, and he looked uneasily at the boy. To test him, he said, 'And where did you put this?' pointing to the grammar.

'You told me I should want to remember it nearly all. It is the hardest book I ever found to put away, for there are no pictures in it, and I had to make pictures for everything myself. It is, on account of this, scattered. I cannot tell you all; it would take too long. Suppose I put *anima* into the Spirit of Tears, *domus* at home, *spes* over the altar, and *amo*——'

He paused awhile. Father Murtagh wondered if this were a premonitory symptom of insanity. He asked quietly, keeping an observant eye on the boy, 'And where did you put *amo*?'

'Beyond the horizon, in a land I read of.'

'What land?'

'Australia.'

The old man started.

'I have no book about Australia.'

'No. I read about it in a newspaper—one Edward Martin gave to me to read aloud.'

'And why do you put *amo* in Australia?'

'Because in the second skin of its earth there is gold.'

'Gold!' cried the old man, starting back. 'Gold!' he thought, in a whirl of grief. 'This boy, too, is infected. Gold got somehow has been the ruin of his race. Gold! and so young!' Then calming his manner as much as he could, he said, 'And do you love the idea of gold, John Lane?'

'Yes. Gold, from all I can gather out of the books you lent me, is what puts sinews into the arms of men, and I

should like gold. I shall go to Australia, and find it as those diggers do.'

'Ah, boy! gold is a curse to undo the world.'

'It is no more than lead or iron.'

'But its influence.'

'It makes men strong.'

'Strong for evil, you thoughtless boy.'

'What a man is, he is, whether strong or weak; and I would be strong.'

'You will go to ruin if you long for gold.'

'I shall be neither more nor less than I am, no matter what I get; and I shall get gold if I may; for I must feel power in my limbs.'

'But remember your unhappy father,' pleaded the old man in an agony. 'Some dark misfortune, wherein all think gold is concerned, robbed him of his hearing and the knowledge of God. Remember your father!'

'My father cast me off, and passes me when we meet as though I were an evil spirit. From the day I left the Island until now he has never touched my hand. You know I did all you wished, and sent pleading messages to him by the Fool. I know nothing of what gold has been to him, or of how he got what he paid for the gun. See how he has lived. Did it strengthen him? He is dumb; I have speech. He is solitary; I shall go abroad. Is there any likeness?'

'My child, my child! My dear child, I tremble for you! This is like the working of some hereditary taint. Heaven grant you may never leave Killard!'

The old man was quite overcome. The indomitable confidence, the bold stern individuality, the weight of purpose, fixed and unalterable, manifested in the strange voice and resolute manner, almost cowed the nervous

priest. He made up his mind to argue no longer with the lad, but to pray unceasingly against this lust of gold. With a copy of 'Cæsar's Commentaries' and a Latin-English dictionary, the boy returned home.

CHAPTER III.

CHESTNUT HAIR.

In the lapse of years Cahill had grown stout and redder than of old. He had passed the period since his visit to Killard with Mr. Heywood in his former desultory manner. By this time people had unanimously come to the conclusion that his father must have found the office of bailiff to Lord Clonmore more profitable than anyone could have supposed, saved a large sum of money, and left it to his son Christopher. If the popular estimate of the man had altered, it had altered for the better. He paid his way, offended no one, and if he had vices, who has not? and there were others as bad as he in the town. He was friendly and cordial to all, and all were more or less friendly in manner to him, but few regarded him with cordiality.

Up to a certain point no one could be more communicative than he; beyond that point it was impossible to make him utter a word. He spoke much and well of his neighbours, and rarely allowed their reputations to be assailed without raising a protest. He discussed general topics with freedom, and a species of dull common sense. But somehow he seemed to take only an assumed interest in most of the people and affairs around him, and rarely sought companionship or was eager to

hear news or gossip. It was this reticence and want of active interest that kept him remote from the hearts of others.

Another circumstance added depth to this feeling of estrangement. Frequently he would disappear for two or three days. On his return he never, to a soul, would breathe the name of the place where he had been. He would say, in reply to questions, that he 'had gone out of town on business.' Not another word could be extracted from him.

On one subject alone he could be thoroughly roused into active interest. No mention, however slight, of either the Bishop's Island or the Lanes failed to stir him. At times when either was alluded to, his wandering eyes would for a moment fix themselves on the speaker; he would question, without commenting or expressing an opinion of any kind. In the interval between Mr. Heywood's first visit to the village and his consent to go a second time, in company with Cahill, no fact of any interest had come to light about David Lane. The solitary man dwelt on his Island, holding less intercourse than ever with the mainland, and but seldom receiving visits from his only friend, Tom the Fool. Since the expulsion of the boy a slight diminution of good feeling appeared to have arisen in the heart of the deaf mute towards Tom; and although the latter always spoke of his friend in the old loyal, enthusiastic manner, David Lane appeared less anxious for the society of his companion.

The evening before Cahill intended setting out for Killard, he returned to his lodgings earlier than usual. As a rule he did not get home till eleven, or later; this evening he lit his candle, a common dipt one, at a little

after nine. He had reading to do before going to bed, and although no great student of literature, he was anxious to be at work.

The room was a moderately comfortable one, and served him as a sitting and bedroom. It contained a cabinet, old-fashioned sofa, painted wooden low-posted bedstead, a small square table, and a few chairs. The carpet did not cover all the floor; the bare places were clean. Altogether, the apartment seemed much better than a person seeing Cahill in the streets of Clonmore would fancy for him. The most curious eye could not, however, discover a book or newspaper. But the bailiff's son rarely dealt in such literature. Manuscript was his delight.

When he had bolted the door, he opened the cabinet and produced a small leather writing-case. This he undid, and from an interior pocket of it took a large envelope, sealed with red wax, stamped with an irregular row of indentations, forming a rough semi-circle. He looked at the seal with great care, and appearing satisfied tore open the envelope.

The envelope contained a long strip of paper, made up of several sheets of ordinary old-fashioned letter-paper, gummed together one below the other, so as to make a strip three or four feet in length. The document was covered from top to bottom with close writing, and signed 'William Cahill.' This was Christopher Cahill's favourite manuscript, in fact, his only one. He had read it at least a hundred times, but as he was going over to Killard in the morning, and the matter of the manuscript concerned that neighbourhood, he thought he would refresh his memory by reading it once more. It took him quite two hours to get through it, for often he paused and

leaned his head on his hand until the clear flame of the feeble candle grew dull and red, and toiled languidly over a huge black canopy of snuff. Yet there appeared nothing abstruse or intricate in the writing. It was no more than an account of the purchase of the Bishop's Island by the elder David Lane, and a few remarks of 'William Cahill' thereupon.

The narrative did not differ in any material point from that of Mrs. Cantillon, told to young Martin. There was some additional detail as to the manner in which old Lane wrought upon the former Lord Clonmore to sell him the rock, but, for all practical purposes, the two accounts were identical. The brief comment attached by William Cahill occupied no more than a few lines, and ran thus:

'i never could make it clear to me mind why the ould man got all about the huntin, fishin, hawkin, mines, wood, water, an fore-shore rights put in, onless he found a mine on the iland, which would acount fur his wantin to buy it, *an other things besides.*'

This was, however, the passage which had fascinated young Cahill. He had often heard the story from his father's lips, and never unaccompanied by this supposition. Hence his interest in the Lanes and their landed property.

During the lifetime of William Cahill a great number of farms on Lord Clonmore's estate had fallen out of lease, and in the tenants' desire for renewals old Cahill had profited a good deal in the way of gifts of conciliation. He had acquired enough money to leave his son independent, and the son had retained his independence by living like a gentleman. Into this life had entered one consuming curiosity and one supreme desire. He would

have parted from half the savings of his father to learn the true history of Lane's desire to purchase the rock; he would have given all his money for the rock itself, and as far as active hope could enter into one of his sluggish nature, it possessed him to own the Bishop's Island, with right to all that was on it, under it, around it, and above it. To attain this he would have faced almost anything, for, added to the dim notion of masses of shining metal, to his mind there hung a mysterious, occult air of superhuman power around the Island, and him who did or might possess it; and although outwardly he smiled at the idea of its owner having dealings with Darkness, inwardly he wondered how matters really stood between the Lanes and the Invisible.

If he would have risked all his fortune to possess that barren rock, he would not have shirked the contemplation of still vaster stakes, supposing he only knew the game and the wager on the other side.

In his dull, sullen soul there lay a dim vision of vulgar grandeur, and to gratify the vague yearnings of a nebulous imagination he would not have recoiled before the demand for any stake that might be demanded, and that he had the power to lay.

When he had finished his reading he placed the manuscript in a new envelope, of size similar to the former one, and closed down the fold. Then he took a piece of sealing-wax, melted it deliberately, and put a large patch, the circumference of half-a-crown, over the lap of the envelope. When this was cool, but still soft, he bent the envelope, and made a deep indentation in the wax with his upper front teeth. Having replaced the packet in the interior pocket of the writing-case, he undressed, muttering to himself:

'That's the seal the like of which no one else has; and 'tis easy to be sure it's unbroken, for I can try if the seal fits if I have any suspicions.'

Next morning broke dull and sombre. As the two gentlemen of Clonmore went on their way to Killard, a heavy leaden sky hung over the dry, brown downs. Not a breath of wind stirred the brittle, short grass. Not a bird sang in the heavens. A depressing warmth stagnated between the clouds and earth.

'It looks and feels like thunder,' remarked the younger man, regarding the sky with dissatisfaction.

'There are symptoms of the presence of electric fluid in large quantities, and of imminent disturbance,' returned Mr. Heywood, looking at the clouds as though he knew too much about them to hold them in good esteem.

Somehow, neither the philosopher nor his companion seemed proof against the depressing influence of the atmosphere, and the journey was accomplished almost in silence.

It was late in the forenoon when they arrived. They drove straight to Casey's, and Cahill dismissed the car, as the date of their return was uncertain.

Having taken some refreshment, Cahill proposed they should walk up the village towards the southern downs. The ascent was steep, and the old man feeble, so that it took a little while, even though Cahill lent the aid of his arm.

Edward Martin's house was the most southerly of the village. Strictly speaking, it was not in the village. It crowned the southern crest of the downs, and no other house was near, but from it all the village could be plainly seen, spreading out in one long street with

narrow lanes, reaching inland like tattered fringe on a pole. From the porch, facing inland, the parish church of blue limestone was visible on the summit of a hill which rose at the remoter lip of the valley. The church was at least a mile distant from Martin's house. By its side, in a bare, bleak yard, stood Father Murtagh's dwelling—a cold, cheerless, four-roomed cottage—the most pretentious residence within view.

The landscape inland was an uneventful plain of yellow moss. Looking from the shore, the eye passed, somewhat giddy, from tangles of prodigious columns shattered and confounded, yawning chasms of treacherous gloom, and narrow clefts between gigantic cliffs, where the yellow waters ground the rocks mercilessly, to the broad, grey expanse of ocean and the lowering sky that, resting heavily on the horizon, made the line where sky and water touched seem like the lips of the Universe compressed and stern, restraining a voice which would shake the heavens from their pillared heights and fling the waters from their voiceless depths into the abyss of above.

The two men continued to mount slowly. Mr. Heywood was much distressed. His breath came short, and he leaned heavily on his companion. At length it became obvious to Cahill the old man could get no further without first resting. By the wayside lay the main-mast of a ship wrecked on the rocky bar ten years ago. Cahill pointed to it, and said:

'Let us take a rest, sir; the road is very steep, and there's something in the air that makes my blood feel like lead.'

'Ah!' the philosopher sighed, in relief, as he sat down trembling and panting. When he had recovered a little

breath, he spoke. 'A person ignorant of science might attribute our exhaustion to fatigue, but such is not the real source. We are neither of us old or infirm enough not to be able to afford, without inconvenience, tissue enough to climb this elevation. Our present inconvenience arises from the pure sea-air rapidly oxygenating the blood, burning out the charcoal or carbon, as the chemists call it, and so depriving us of that most useful and invigorating solid. When people come from the inland to the sea they live too fast.'

'Faith! Mr. Heywood, there isn't much chance of anyone living too fast in Killard; you couldn't find a single public-house in it from end to end,' said Cahill gravely.

'My dear friend,' replied the philosopher, in the calm tone of infallibility, 'we can live too fast without the aid of alcohol. There is a certain gas called oxygen, and if you were placed in a chamber full of it you would burn yourself to death in a short time.'

'Between us and all harm!' ejaculated the listener, somewhat dubiously. 'Of course, I know no one could live in the place they keep the gas for Clonmore, but no one is likely to want to live there, except a fool.'

'The two fluids are quite different; but let that pass. You raise an interesting question by your indirect supposition that a person of unsound mind is more likely than a person in sound mental health to run a risk. You would find it hard to prove that.'

'Maybe so; maybe so,' assented Cahill heedlessly. Then suddenly he seemed to take a lively interest in the question, for he asked, with animation, 'Tell me, Mr. Heywood, would you think a man a fool supposing he

was willing to run a great risk to satisfy his mind about a thing that was a trouble to him?'

'Certainly not. Men of science run every conceivable risk to solve questions that have arisen to them, or to prove their theories, or to make discoveries.'

'And is it only men of science do such things?' Cahill's attention was now fully roused. He looked at the impassive, careworn face of the old philosopher with eager anxiety.

'Well, I don't know.' He had never thought it possible to stir the depths of curiosity in the human breast with anything but science. The idea was novel, and he could not make up his mind offhand.

Cahill now fully fronted his companion. He sat above him, and consequently his face looked towards Killard. Mr. Heywood's eyes were turned towards him, but no light shone in them. They were dull, lacked lustre, and from mere habit looked introspective; but time had bedimmed the interior view, and to judge by the expression on the old man's face, the inward glance met only a melancholy waste, a Memphis of the mind, a tattered, unconnected parchment off which the illumination and the writing had nearly faded away.

All at once intelligence returned to the face. The eyes shone and gleamed with a strange, startled light. The mouth opened, the hands fell nervously to the side, the body stooped forward.

In his desire to push the conversation, Cahill saw nothing of all this, or attributed it to a kind of learned ecstasy. He repeated his unanswered question, adding, 'When men are very curious about anything but science; when, as people say, they are in love, and want, suppose, to find out where the girl is, suppose some one stole her

away from her home and friends, won't they run great risks to find out about her?'

He had taxed his imagination prodigiously to create this hypothesis.

'A little girl!' muttered the old man, as though he were alone, and had put part of Cahill's question to himself.

Except while uttering the words, his face and manner did not alter, and having spoken, the mouth remained open once more.

'Ay, suppose a little girl,' agreed Cahill, desirous of captivating the other's wandering attention.

'Yes, one would risk much.' These words came like the former ones.

'And suppose,' pursued Cahill, who now thought the old philosopher was in a trance, during which he could see things hidden, 'that one thought there was something more than earthly things had to do with it—suppose he thought Darkness had a hand in these things, would you count the man a fool if he risked his life to find it out?'

'No.'

With a sudden movement, the old man rose upright, and uttered a hoarse cry of grief. He attempted to rush forward, but stumbled over Cahill's feet. Evidently he had completely forgotten the other's presence. With hands outstretched and haggard face, he stood a moment as though he had seen an apparition, then moaned out in a dreary, heart-broken voice, letting his hands drop, and sinking down on the old mast,

'I thought I saw her at the top of the hill! I thought I saw her!'

'Who?'

'My little child—my little Mary with the chestnut hair, that they slew! that they slew! My little Mary, who is dead!'

'Where?' shouted Cahill, springing to his feet.

'There.' He waved his hand towards the brow of the hill.

'Near that house?' Cahill's excitement was intense. His breath came short; his chest heaved; his dull eyes glowed, and his whole frame shook as though an ague had seized him.

'Yes, near that house. She faded away just by the wall.'

'Why, man, that was Mary Martin I told you of; and that is Martin's house!'

CHAPTER IV.

THE LOAD-STONE ISLAND.

THE dull day passed into a gloomy evening. No cheerful sunlight broke through the oppressive monotony of cloud overhead. Gradually the light faded away over the dull leaden waters of the ocean, and heavy darkness descended. There was not a breath of wind. The air clung to the earth like a sodden garment; all elasticity seemed to have departed from it, and it lay as though nature were settling down for ever into a prodigious calm.

The old man had been greatly shattered by the event on the road. He, contrary to his old way, kept an almost unbroken silence. His resources had been largely overtaxed by his fancy when he thought he saw his dead

niece once more, and a reaction, amounting almost to torpor, followed. He answered Cahill in monosyllables, often wide of the question asked, and volunteered no word. His disordered faculties had been rudely shaken; had been thrown out of their old order, and time was necessary for their re-adjustment. All day he had been submissive, obedient to the slightest word of his companion, though often the signification of words did not reach him quickly, and the words had to be repeated. He had walked about, sat down, eaten and drunk as he had been bid, without once intruding any indication of a personal will.

'If he keeps on like this, I don't know how things may go,' thought Cahill; 'but for the present it's just as well as it is.'

At a little after eight, Cahill turned to Mr. Heywood and said:

'The journey and the sea-air, and the sight of little Mary Martin, have tired you greatly, sir; don't you think you'd be better in bed?'

'No doubt—no doubt,' muttered the old man wearily; but he made no sign of going.

'Then hadn't you better lie down?' pursued the bailiff's son.

'Yes.'

They were then sitting in Casey's back-room. It was quite dark out of doors. On the table burned a common candle. In one corner was a truckle-bed, in another a rough couch made up of planks supported on boxes. Upon the planks had been placed some sweet, fresh straw, covered with a coarse rug. The bed was to accommodate Mr. Heywood, the litter was for Cahill. A large clothes-horse, upon which wall-paper had been

pasted, served as a screen round the bed. The litter lay near the window looking into the back-yard.

The old man rose, and disappeared behind this screen. He did not take the candle with him, nor did he say 'good night' to his companion. As soon as he was out of sight Cahill moved about, took off his coat and boots, and when he judged the other to be in bed, blew out the light, and lay down without undressing himself further.

Thus he remained an hour, until the old man's regular breathing showed that he slept soundly.

By this time the whole village was plunged in darkness and the silence of the grave, save for the weary moaning of the ocean on the invisible shore. Then Cahill, who had not closed an eye, but lay planning and hoping, and fearing, rose as slowly and softly as a cat, caught up his coat and boots, took the candle out of the socket and put it carefully in a pocket of the coat; after this he stood a moment breathless, listening intently.

Not a sound outside the room but that of the uneasy sea; in the room the quiet breathing of a sleeping man. All was right so far.

Treading on his toes, he approached the window, and raised the sash inch by inch with elaborate care; when it reached the level of the button he turned the button up, let his coat and boots fall out of the window, swung himself softly over the sill, and reached the ground of the yard. With as great stealth as before, he lowered the sash, and, having put on his boots and coat, crossed the yard, climbed the low wall, and found himself in a narrow alley leading to the main street of the village.

'So far so good,' he muttered to himself, as he trod softly into the main street, and took the way towards the beach.

When he had gained the sands he paused and listened. No footfall came from the village. He looked—no light burned. He was quite familiar with the place, and moved without hesitation. Often before he had wandered on those sands by night, or sat upon the cliffs near the Bishop's when the people of Clonmore wondered where he was, and when the villagers had no suspicion he lingered in their neighbourhood.

During his previous visits he had confined himself to observation, and dull, sluggish wondering and wishing. But to-night his manner was different; resolution and decision were in his movements, indicating action close at hand.

It was impossible to see anything on land; a faint phosphorescent light flickered over the water, the lower lines of the cliffs and the vast rocky bar at the mouth of the bay were dimly revealed. Awhile he bent his ears towards the sand.

'Yes,' he whispered, 'it's near high-water now; I'll not have to roll her far, and the ebb will help me out of the bay.'

Thrusting his hand into a pocket, he took something out, and walked, without any symptom of hesitation or doubt, to a low flat rock where several currachs lay bottom up. Raising one of these, he crept in under her, let her fall back, struck a match and lit a dark lantern, which was the thing he had taken from his pocket a few seconds before.

'If I struck it in the open air some one might see me, and I don't want that,' he said.

He shut the door of the lantern and directed the light from the bull's-eye upon the mast, and sail, and oars, and thowl-pins lying under the boat.

'All right, all right! this is the best currach; she has thowl-holes for sculls; I saw that to-day. But I must have a second mast. I'll get it from under the next boat.'

Shooting the slide across the bull's-eye, all was pitch dark again. Then he crawled out from under the canvas boat, placed his lantern on the ground near the next currach, and began carefully canting the boat he had been under towards the water. This was no very difficult task, for the rock was quite smooth and sloped gently outward.

With a sharp splashing sound the boat smote the water. The decline was so gradual that when he had swung her round bow to shore, her light stem was not fully water borne. All this he had calculated on. She would not float away while he fetched the gear.

In ten minutes he had all aboard. Seizing the gunwale, he partly lifted the boat, and worked her gently down the slope until she floated free. Then he jumped in, took up an oar, and shoved her off with all his might. She glided rapidly over the tranquil water. Inside the bar the sea was always calm except when storms blew, and even then the waves reached to no great height. From the southern corner of the bay, where Cahill now was, to the southern opening in the reef was a safe and easy way; he had on his left perpendicular cliffs, with no dangerous rocks. His plan was to pull along under the cliffs until he met the reef, and then follow that at a slight distance, for here rocks were found, until he gained the narrow way leading to the open sea. This would take an hour. Before commencing to row, he sat down astride a thwart amidships, and wiped his forehead and shook the water out of his boots.

As soon as he had recovered, he commenced to pull, and never ceased until he reached the point where the reef met the shore. Here he again rested awhile, then resumed his oars until he came to the southern opening in the reef. He paused a little time, and then rowed slowly and cautiously through the narrow passage and gained the ocean. It was easy enough for anyone familiar with the coast to steer by the blue light of the sea. Although the boat was large, she was constructed of such slight materials, and her bottom was so round and smooth, that Cahill could drive her over the water at a rate quite impossible in any wooden craft of half the size.

When he had cleared the last rock of the strait, he pulled two strokes with his left hand, swung the boat's head south, and, laying his full weight on both oars, cried in a tone of suppressed excitement:

'Now for the Bishop's!'

The boat rose and fell gently in the trough of the long even swells of the Atlantic. The rattle of the oars in the rowlocks, the slight hissing of the water under the bow, the faint gurgle at the stern, and the broad loud murmur of the waves upon the shore, were the only sounds stirring in that vast silent chamber of the night, bounded by sea and shore and the invisible vault of clouds. Earth seemed deserted, forlorn. The heavy atmosphere weighed down as though to suffocate her. The murmur of the water sounded like a vast requiem chanted for an extinct race. Imagination might fill the blue desert of water with pre-Adamite creatures, gigantic mammoths, and sea-serpents of prodigious size and loathsome forms. The terrible melancholy of the scene crushed this solitary man's spirits until, notwithstanding his physical

exertions, the cold sweat broke out on his forehead, ran down his face, and hung upon his beard. He was now wildly wishing he had never undertaken this desperate adventure. The portentous calm and ominous silence roused his superstitious dreads. Were these ramparts a safeguard set by Darkness round that solitary man on that lonely Island? Had he really relations with the Invisible, and was the Invisible befriending him by thus making hideous the night upon which he, Cahill, essayed to pierce the mystery of that man's solitude?

Could it be that the Invisible itself resented his design, and would the resentment go no further? Where would it stop? Might there not be some vapour on that rock which would suffocate any man but Lane himself or one used to it, like the Fool? The Spirit of Tears, the peaceful, sad Spirit of the coast, had often been seen grieving over the Bishop's: was this because wicked spirits held sway there? Did it not seem that Darkness had there founded a colony on earth, and held malign sway for the protection or in the service of the pagan outcast of a Christian race? What might not be there? Shapes that would affright to madness; sounds that would drive the currents of the blood back into the heart until the heart burst in terror?

Miserable fool that he was! why did he not live his life quietly at Clonmore, and give himself no trouble about this accursed man and this accursed Island? He had money enough of his own; why could he not let the deaf-mute be? Should he go back? Turn the currach's head towards Killard, pull with all his might, replace the boat, steal into his room and cover himself up securely against this awful night and the unendurable fancies of what might be on that appalling Island?

To lie safely in bed, in a good man's house, free from evil design, or design that the Invisible might deem evil, to lie and think about the morning, the fresh sweet morning and homely wholesome talk with homely wholesome men and women who worshipped God and did no great wrong to neighbours, and were applauded by clergymen and all other honest folk—what a blessed picture compared to this!

Compared to floating through this soul-deadening air, through this impenetrable darkness towards, perhaps, a darkness more abominable than the fancy of man had ever pictured.

He loosed his necktie, but did not alter his course. The influence of a life-long fascination overrode the terrors or qualms of the hour. It seemed to him, debate it as he might, the boat's prow would continue to point south until it touched the Bishop's Island, just under the terrace. The Load-stone Island of fable never drew ship more surely than the mystery of this rock sucked Christopher Cahill towards it through the blind, sightless air. He now became conscious of his utter helplessness.

He couldn't go back; no, not if he had the assurance his worst fancies would be realized. At his start he had defied the guarding influence of the place, and that influence which would have repelled him before he had launched the boat now impelled him irresistibly to follow out his scheme. He felt as though his will sat by, manacled and powerless, and saw him rush headlong into a chasm whose depths were peopled with things too wild and too vile for human eyes to see without destruction.

A sharp shock.

Merciful heaven! he had arrived already!

He jerked the oars in out of the rowlocks, dropped his head into his open palms, and sat cowering and half-stunned for a long while.

The sea was not as tranquil as might have been expected, considering that there had been no wind for some days. The low swells came at regular intervals, but out here they were not even; they were a little unequal on the crests, and the light currach pitched as she mounted the top of each. She was still lying in the trough, but had drifted half a cable's length from the Island.

What was that?

The man in the boat started, raised his head and looked up.

At last the pall of clouds was opening, and in the parting shone pale blue stars. But this opening was far out to sea, and the light afforded by the stars scarcely reached the boat, and slightly illumined a patch of sea miles to the westward.

But whence had that sudden brightness come? and whither had it gone?

Cahill shuddered. That small clear space of blue to some extent quieted and soothed his mind. Above him, he could now see the vague outline of the mighty cliffs leaning over the darkness. But they seemed no more now than cliffs, and the waters looked more real and familiar. Supernatural terror was losing possession of his soul, and he began to feel contempt for himself of a few moments before.

The old fascination gained ground; his courage rose. Why should he put faith in those foolish thoughts? Here he was under the Bishop's Island at last, by night and with the means of compassing his desires at hand.

What a fool he had been! What a fool he should be to waste this opportunity because of an idle, childish dread. David Lane was sleeping in his hut above: it was six hours to dawn; time and occasion suited. Bah! for his fears; let him go to work.

But where had that sudden light come from and whither had it gone? The lantern?

He raised it. The metal retained some heat still, but the candle had burned out. Never mind! He had taken a piece of one from Casey's and here it was. Fortunately, he had provided a double supply! No doubt the expiring flicker of the candle had shot through the ventilator of the lamp; that was what had caused the sudden light.

He lit the fresh piece of candle, and fell to work by the light of the lantern.

Taking the two slender masts he had carried with him, he brought their ends together, made them lap two feet one over the other, and bound them firmly with rope-yarn. Then fitting one end into the step, he got his shoulder under the mast, raised it upright, and clasped it with the iron holdfast in the thwart. This double top-weight made the currach very crank. She rolled dangerously from side to side. Seizing the oars, he pulled once more to the Island.

Meanwhile, the opening in the vault of cloud had greatly increased. It was no longer circular, but stretched in a narrow defile from east to west, the eastern end reaching almost to the shore, the western nearly to the horizon. The edges of the clouds shone white as though a moon had risen behind them, but no trace of moonlight fell upon the ocean or upon the shore. Owing to these shining clouds and the great addition of starlight

the Island could be plainly seen, and even the detail of its front made out.

Cahill knew every crevice of that stormworn shaft. Without hesitation he pulled in under the northern corner of the terrace. Here opened a narrow gap or cleft. The sides were smooth, and when the boat had been dragged in, she rose and fell on the broken swells, now lightly touching the polished side to the right, now that to the left. Above Cahill hung the perpendicular side of the Island on the left, as he stood up and faced the bow. On his right, the rock rose twenty feet in a straight line; then there was a break—a notch, as it were, in the great wall, and above this notch the surface looked irregular and ragged, and slanted inward. This notch was the terrace, and this broken ground the region of the path. Over the cleft, above the damp glittering sides of the Island, spread a visible plain of dark heavy cloud.

Cahill looked up; glanced at the lip of the terrace, and then at the top of the pole. The latter rose a foot above the level of the terrace.

'Good!' he cried. 'Now for it.'

He went forward and unwound the rope attached to the grappling-iron, found the middle of the line, and, making a loop there, thrust his head through it. Having done this he came back to the mast, and clutching it between his hands and knees, began to clamber up slowly and laboriously.

The boat swayed violently from side to side. In open water she would have gone over before he had gained half the height of the lower mast. Here, at first, she swung heavily, now dashing the mast against one wall of the cleft, now against the other. But, although she struggled like a frantic beast to rid herself of the unusual

burden, she could not turn over. At each roll the mast met the smooth cliff and kept her upright.

Notwithstanding this security from being flung into the sea, the ascent proved one of enormous difficulty and danger. The spar was slender, and not very firm in its position. Each wave that touched the shore raised the boat some feet, and then left her to fall irregularly through the cleft. Now she ground heavily against one side in her descent, threatening to tear away her fragile sides, now for a moment in the upward movement she stuck at some slight inequality, and seemed destined to remain fixed until the rising water overwhelmed her, or until she flew into pieces from the excessive strain.

Still he clung and clambered, making slow progress, a foot an hour it seemed to him—a foot a minute in reality. What terrible minutes for him !

Suppose the currach should stick fast in anyone of those upheavals or down sinkings, it would be either crushed asunder by the upward pressure, or, falling at last from the embraces of the cliff, be swamped in the gurgling waters beneath. What, then, of him? A swift plunge—a scream—a brief struggle ; for down there, was absolutely no projecting rock, no friendly crevice to afford foothold or shelter.

He might shout till morning, and no sound from him could be heard. Fishing-boats never came close to the Island, and no one, even with perfect hearing, could catch the faintest echo of his voice up those two hundred feet of rocks, and amid the groaning of these restless waves.

David Lane was asleep in bed, and quite deaf besides. But, even if Lane could hear him ; if Lane came down that ragged precipitous path and found him struggling

for life amid the wreckage of the boat, what would he do? Throw a line? No. Cast down rocks and earth to speed the death-work of the water. He could fancy the dark dim figure, standing above him, leaning out from the edge of the terrace, with a huge fragment of rock lifted high in both hands to annihilate one who had sought to intrude upon his sacred domain. He could fancy the hissing of the ragged fragment through the dark blue air, the dull sound when it hit its mark, and the almost insensible plunge into those suffocating waters that would never again divide over his head.

He redoubled his exertions, and conquered two feet of his upward way in the space of time it had before taken him to accomplish one.

Ha! that was better—if she could only hold out against the horrible grating and grinding on the rocks.

The currach now leaned altogether in a southerly direction, and rolled no more. Above him the mast rubbed against the edge of the terrace, retained in this position by the way in which his weight now drew the currach more and more definitely southward. The wooden rail surrounding the currach outside the canvas on the gunwale tore into splinters. He heard this, and desperate with fear, strained every nerve, and, just as the lath ripped off the side, felt the rocks no longer close to his head. He had raised his forehead and eyes above the ledge.

Clinging to the platform with his elbows and hands, and pushing his body still upward with his legs, in a minute he rolled over on the terrace, and the mast, released, dashed with a loud clash against the opposite side of the cleft.

Safe at last!

He lay without motion. A kind of numbed gratitude dulled his soul. His body and mind were too much exhausted by the toil and the terror to admit of immediate action. After a little while he felt the rope round his neck dragged at. The currach had drifted out of the opening. This roused him. Taking the end of the line, which he knew to be attached to the grappling-iron, he pulled at it until the iron came up. This he fixed securely between two rocks, and then flung the loop over the edge. Thus the currach, driven by the tide and held by the line, rode safe from chafing twenty fathoms off the Island.

It was now midnight, and, so far as Cahill knew, he was the first man who, during fifty years, had touched that Island, except the Fool and the Lanes, upon the latter of whom a curse lay, and whose race had mysterious gold.

CHAPTER V.

LOW WATER.

By this time the aspect of the heavens had greatly altered. The rift in the clouds had lengthened and widened; a large field of blue, studded with azure stars, stretched from the western to the southern horizon. The luminousness at the edges of the western clouds had greatly increased; every now and then along the ragged margins a pulse of light beat, as though a great wave had passed by them. Here and there, too, the northern and southern plains of vapour opened, showing patches of far-sunken stars.

Cahill rested another while before beginning to climb

the dangerous path. He would have liked to pray, but prayer was not a very familiar attitude of his mind, and, moreover, there seemed something like blasphemy in asking for help on such an expedition. He did not know how far events might carry him. Could it be that he was on the brink of a discovery which would set his mind at rest for ever? or could anything short of participation leave him at ease? What should he see? what should he learn? What would befall when the goal of this night's toil was reached? Anyway, let him be getting forward.

He rose and turned his back to the dark-blue plain of ocean, and looked up.

'No easy job in daylight,' he muttered; 'but now——' He did not finish the sentence; he shook his head.

As he was about to take his first upward step he faced hastily round, and again examined the sky.

Had the moon suddenly risen? No; there was now a broad, even, dull blue star-light, and the sea shone more phosphorescently than before. But could the elevation at which he stood cause the distant sea, the sea away there on the southern shore, to boom so much more loudly in his ears? Perhaps.

He wheeled round, determined to banish thought as much as possible, and concentrate all his faculties on the great physical task before him.

His progress was slow, and enormously difficult. Before removing his weight from one point to another, he examined cautiously each new jag of rock he intended trusting his weight to. Fortunately, the wild winds and fierce rains of winter never allowed loose stones or gravel to rest on the track; as it was all composed of firm rock, there existed little danger of his foothold giving way.

But suppose his feet should slip? He sickened at the idea, and strove with all power of will to banish it from his mind.

When he had mounted a third of the way he sat down. He felt stifled. The heavy air clung to him; his limbs were heavy and nerveless. He wondered, if for a moment his strength failed, what would happen? Should he lie as he sat on that narrow projection; or, sliding from the giddy height, fall a shattered mass into the sullen sea? Action was the only thing to banish such hideous fancies. So, setting his face once more to the cliff, he resumed his way.

But despite all his efforts, his mind would not rest. Killard and Clonmore lay peacefully sleeping away behind this adamantine wall. His old familiar room in the town, and his temporary chamber at the village, were at his disposal. He might, without risk or blame, be now safely housed in either. He could fancy he reclined on that temporary couch, and heard the old man's peaceful breathing. In the morning they would call the old man, and he would come from that room refreshed and invigorated with sleep, find smiling faces, comforting talk, and breakfast. And here was he, Cahill, like some obscure insect, clinging for life to the surface of this almost steep cliff, with a track of broken rocks reaching down to the boiling waters beneath. Where should he be when morning dawned and birds sang, and the pleasant sun shone out, and little children played upon the level beach? Ugh! This ledge was broad; he would rest a while.

Then a wild desire to descend, to fly, seized him. All his resolution died out, and he made up his mind to abandon the scheme altogether.

With frantic precipitancy he prepared to retrace his

steps. He caught the ledge, and dropped his feet. Horror on horror, his feet touching nothing! With a cry of despair he swiftly drew up his legs, and crouched on the narrow rock. He clung to it as though the solid base of the Island had given way, and the vast mass was about to sink into the black vault beneath.

Had the path under him slipped down into the ocean?

He listened with agonized attention, but could catch no sound, save that of the billows on the shore and the beating of his terrified heart.

Absurdity to suppose the path had sunken! Really his reason was flying from before his childish fears. He was a full-grown, strong man, and ought to be above such ridiculous notions. He had come to try and satisfy the desire of a lifetime, and he was not now going to turn back because of imaginary dangers. He would and should find out something about this place and this man before the sun shone again. Besides, his attempt a moment ago had demonstrated the impossibility of descent in the dark. It was comparatively easy to climb the steep, for he could feel his way with his hands; but in going down he should not be able to do so, and he must wait for daylight. While he was here he might as well go on, and three-fourths of the height had already been reached. What a fool he had been—what a coward to think of returning!

In half an hour more Christopher Cahill gained the level land of the Bishop's Island, and flung himself exhausted and breathless on the short dry moss.

At first his thoughts were in such disorder that they assumed no settled shapes. He was safe. He had escaped with life and sound limbs from that hideous path;

a dull feeling of unformulated gratitude possessed him. He lay upon the solid, level ground, and clung to it with a kind of worship. Life had never before seemed so dear as after dragging it in his hands up that appalling precipice in that great darkness. It was sweet to lie, and say the word 'Safe! safe!' over and over again to his heart, and press his chest against the flat firm ground.

As he regained breath and calmness, this sensation of gratitude grew weaker. He was safe; but he had been safe before starting from Killard, and now he was perched high upon the lonely, mysterious Island, and should have to remain here—doing what—until dawn? Doing what?

Sitting up, he looked around. He was in the hollow of the land leading to the path. Lane's hut could not be seen from his present position.

Now that he had accomplished his design so far, what further could it lead to? It was night—dark night. Lane was asleep in the hut beyond that rise of ground—what could he do? Why had he come?

He shuddered! Might it not be that Lane was awake, and would come forth presently, and finding him, seize him, and fling him over into the sea? He felt that he should be able to make no resistance. He should be a paralysed man, a mere dead inert mass in the hands of the deaf mute. Terror would freeze his muscles. Idiot that he had been ever to come here on a fool's errand! Once more a thousand superstitious fears assailed him, and he shivered and quaked like a man struck with ague.

The large banks of cloud drifted wider apart, and between the banks the pools of sky, spangled with quiet

stars, grew broader. Around the edges of these clouds the same brightness shone and flickered as along the margin of the main masses. Although there was motion overhead, it was of that slow character which suggests motion against will. It seemed as if some influence were dragging apart vapours which naturally clung together.

It was near two in the morning before Christopher Cahill could bring his mind to the idea of approaching Lane's hut. He arose and crept cautiously out of the hollow, and stood in the higher hollow facing the banished Bishop's former resting-place. He went so as to keep out of sight of either of the windows. He knew all about the hut. He knew where lay the chamber which had been the boy's, the one occupied by the deaf mute—yet he stole towards the boy's room first.

He gained the door—it stood open. He entered. The room was just as it had been that night the father sat by the vacant bed, only the bedclothes had mouldered into rags, and the table fallen asunder from exposure to the wet sea winds.

Cahill had saved some of his second piece of candle. He struck a light.

He was perfectly familiar with all that met his eyes, for though the Fool was reticent, now and then, as the years went by, a word had fallen from Tom at odd times; these Cahill had gathered up diligently from one person and another, put all together, and found the facts strangely confirming his conception.

Why had David Lane left that door open and allowed the things in the room to be corroded by the damp salt air? Another man in his position, in the position of a simple line-fisher from the rocks would have carefully

guarded the furniture, humble though it happened to be. Even a well-to-do fisherman with a boat of his own would not have allowed his property to go to ruin in this way. He would have sold it if he had no further need of it. Here were more inexplicable proceedings of the dumb man's.

All at once Cahill recollected the gun. Strangely enough the thought rather calmed him than otherwise. He had never heard the ultimate fate of the weapon, and he believed it to be still on the Island. But a gun was a purely human weapon that anyone might buy and use. It had to be charged with powder and lead. There was nothing hidden or supernatural about a gun; and if David Lane wanted or kept a gun for defence, was it not a sign he relied, and had to rely, on purely human agencies for his protection? It might be that if this lonely man had any conversation with the unseen, the dealings concerned nothing between Lane and the rest of mankind, but were wholly confined to Lane himself and the unseen. Thus, for instance, in the matter of his son's hearing he had not attained his wish, fate had beaten him, the boy now spoke. It might be that Lane's arts were potent for his own individual and strictly personal purposes—powerless to operate against others. On the mainland, the idea that a man angered against him possessed a gun, and resolution to use it, would have been terrifying; but after torturing the imagination with all kinds of supernatural dreads in connection with this man and this Island, a gun seemed no more than a stick or a stone; it sank to the level of a weapon common to mankind and easily evaded. What was a gun, which might miss its mark, compared to the infallible and impenetrable operations of Darkness? Nothing!

If David Lane required a gun for offence or defence he was no more than a man with a gun against him, Cahill, a man without a gun. The odds seemed insignificant compared to those he had been contemplating.

He came out of the boy's chamber with a resolute step and erect head, and looked around. Again the aspect of the heavens had altered. Now all the clouds were gathered into large irregular masses, with thin veils spread over the interspaces, dulling the grey light of the stars. The air felt still more oppressive, and the silent dome between earth and cloud was sensibly darkened.

Cahill walked boldly round the hut, and gained the door of the other chamber. There was no latch. He pressed softly against the door and found it to be firmly secured on the inside by one of those wooden bolts as thick as a man's arm, and shooting into the wall. Provided such a bolt is sound and the door firm, ten men could not burst it in without tools. He had not hoped to find the door open; he had tried in order to make sure. He bent his head, and making a funnel of both hands, placed them against the door and applied his ear. The silence was profound, except for the beating of the waves; through their solemn slow cadence he caught the sound of regular loud breathing. Lane was within and asleep.

Cahill went to the window and tried to see the interior, but the darkness was too profound. He arranged the slide of his lantern so as to allow a slender arc of light to escape. This he directed through the window, casting it first towards the roof, to be sure it did not strike upon the face of the man.

Yes, David Lane was sleeping there on that low bed.

He lay on his back. His face was florid, more florid than of old, a rich brown red. His matted dark beard spread down over his naked chest. His mouth was open, and, the full light of the lantern being thrown on the wall close to his head, his white teeth glittered through the hair that fringed his lip.

Bah! Confusion! Could not that wretched candle have lasted one more minute and he might have seen all that was in the room. Two hours yet to daylight and no candle; nothing to be done! This was most vexatious. Why had he been so foolish as to waste the precious candle in the boy's room? Well, there was no help for it now but to wait. Should he sit—better not, he might possibly fall asleep.

Ho! was ever such a blaze as that! Had the heavens opened!

God's mercy! Was earth riven to the core!

He sank on his knees, and covered his eyes, and thrust his thumbs into his ears. For a moment all was still. Then he felt the solid ground shake and totter beneath his feet, the bones of his skull seemed to clatter and his limbs and garments tugged and tightened as if a thousand hands had seized them and were pulling them different ways.

Ah! now was all still again. But for how long?

Miserere nobis! Another such and the Island would burst and fall in a thousand splinters into the sea. That was worse than the former! What a smell!

His wild heart now made a confused tempest in his plugged ears; he felt he should become unconscious if he remained as he was. Stopping his ears created an unendurable sense of suffocation and compression. It seemed as though he were walled up in a close iron

room, the metal of which was becoming red hot and the air scant.

Peccavimus! Peccavimus! Credo in unum Deum, Patrem omnipotentem, factorem cœli et terræ!—Patrem omnipotentem! Patrem omnipotentem! This was a second Deluge falling on earth; God's anger was abroad, and manifest in the skies!

With a shriek he rose, uncovered his eyes, and ran wildly towards the opposite side of the hut, entered the room, flung the door to, and with a shout of agonized fear cast himself on the exiled boy's smouldering bed.

The ocean rolled smoothly and evenly towards the cliffs. Blue light leaped and danced along the surface as far as the eye could penetrate through the flight of the arrows of the rain. The dark blue rain rattled through the windless air with a sound like the falling of tropical hail. Overhead all was chaos. Ragged masses of clouds were but dimly discernible through the perpendicular torrents, save when the blinding yellow lightning shot out and dashed like an exploded meteor into the ocean beneath. In the intervals between the crashes of the thunder, which shook the earth and seemed to be the rending of invisible worlds, the vast plain of waters sent up a sharp low scream as the bolts of rain pierced their trembling sides.

The storm had aroused all the people of Killard. Lightning flashes revealed here and there pale faces of men at windows. Children clung to their mothers, some speechless with fear, some shouting with terror. The women gathered their little ones under their arms, pressed them to their bosoms, and tried to pray during pauses in the terrible war of the thunder, but when the chambers blazed up with the blue reflection, they shrieked and

covered their eyes. Stout men, accustomed to that wild coast, and to the tempests of heaven and earth, spoke what comforting words they could utter in low tones and with faces blanched by the appalling noises and the rapid torrents of fire. Such a storm had never been heard by man now living in that village of Killard, and many of the most courageous thought the destruction of the world at hand.

The vibration of his body and of the hut, and the dazzling glare of the lightning, roused David Lane.

He lay watching the perturbed sky through the small window. The place had never shaken so much before, when yellow fire rushed out of the clouds, and changed to blue as it sank into the sea. The flames had never been so frequent or so intense. He got up and undid the bolt of the door, and looked out on the stupendous conflict. He stepped forth, one pace, and drew back, almost beaten flat by the downward rush of water. But he left the door unbolted. Somehow he felt, not without fear, resolute as his spirit was, although the rending thun der was hidden from him. He pushed the door firmly to, but omitted drawing the bolt, for the hut might show signs of subsiding, and he should be ready to spring out. Then he struck a light, and sat down on a stool, with his face towards the fire-place.

Meanwhile Christopher Cahill had never moved. He lay half-stunned with terror, and wondering his annihilation had been so long delayed. This tempest had not broken out by chance. Such tumult had never before reigned in heaven—such fury had never before confounded earth. Why? Was he not come this night to the accursed Island; and was not the owner of this Island believed to be in league with Darkness? Who

could now doubt? Who could any longer remain in uncertainty of David Lane's unlawful correspondence with invisible Evil? No one. Everything conspired to make what had been a strong suspicion into a valid certainty. He had arrived on this Island, had gained its summit in the presence of such atmospheric confusion as he had never before observed or heard of.

No sooner had he turned the light of his lantern so as to examine the deaf mute, than his candle went out. Scarcely had its light died when flames shot out of heaven, and noises arose as though all the planets and stars had crushed together, and then the torrents of a second deluge fell upon the Island.

Might it not be that this storm was strictly local, and reached no further than the small surface of land on which the hut stood? Darkness was all-powerful, so far as power was not denied by the Supreme. Perhaps such a storm as this would fall without fail on each occasion of an unbidden visitor touching the anathematized rock. Or—

His thought halted. He lifted his head, and ventured to look around. There was a lull of some minutes.

Or could it be that the whole was delusion; the creation of an excited fancy overtaxed? Perhaps a delusion put upon him by the invisible agents of the outcast man? Could it be that—

Oh, what a blaze! Now for the crash! Miserere mihi! Miserere mihi! Credo in unum Deum. Miserere mihi! Miserere!

He flung himself down once more, and covered his eyes.

Factorem cœli et terræ—Miserere nobis! Miserere!

In an hour the flashes and peals became less frequent,

and less in degree. The storm seemed passing away from the land, and drifting farther west as it died. The torrents of rain had diminished.

With the decline of the storm Cahill's mind became calmer, and gradually prostrating dreads left him. But others stepped in to replace them.

It might be, after all, that the tempest was natural, and its occurrence, while he was on the Island, merely a coincidence. Lane, perhaps, nor any power beyond nature acting on his behalf, had no part in it. But it must have wakened Lane, and if so, what had the deaf man done? Had he got up and gone out? Had he descended that precipitous path? If so, had he seen the currach by the glare of the lightning? Indeed, he might see it from the level of the Island without going down at all. Supposing he had seen it, he could come to but one conclusion, that its crew was on the Island, or had been on it; if matters had so happened, what had Lane done?

Nothing on the Bishop's could conceal a human form except an angle of the hut, or the hut itself. Could the dumb man now be examining the exterior of the hut, and would he in a few moments open that door behind and step into this chamber, discover the intruder, and before he, lying there, could know of Lane's entrance, stab him in the back, or shoot him dead?

He turned and rose with a start.

It was now within an hour of dawn, and the elements were at rest. A faint light shone in the east over the land. Not a cloud darkened the vast concave of pale stars. A faint breeze, smelling of fresh morning, moved softly towards the sea, and over all a profound peace

reigned, as though anger had been appeased; the world seemed as it had been before sin had darkened it.

'Good!'

Cahill opened the door, looked about cautiously, stepped forth, stole round the hut, and stood in front of the other door. The light of the candle within made the dingy window-panes luminous. He drew near, inch by inch, stooping so as to keep his head below the sill of the window. When he had gained the wall, he raised his head gradually until his eyes rose above the sill. Then he remained immovable for a minute. All at once he crouched down, and ran quickly, with terror in his eyes, towards the dip of land whence the path sank. He threw himself on his face and hands, breathless, and watched intently the corner of the hut round which he had just come.

'Lane must have guessed I or some one was there,' he thought in an agony; 'or someone must have let him know of it, for he got up nearly the minute I looked at his back.'

All his superstitious dreads rushed back upon him; he quaked and trembled in every limb.

'He'll be after me! He'll be after me!'

He durst not attempt the descent yet; it was too dark, and if Lane were to discover his presence, he had better meet the man on the level ground.

An hour he waited on the wet cold moss, but no one appeared. There was something almost harder to bear in lying and waiting than in knowing the worst. He could not begin the descent, now there was light enough, without trying to find out whether it was likely he should be attacked from above. He should have one more look into that room, come what might.

He returned to the window.

What, merciful Heaven! what was this? The room empty, and Lane had never come forth—could not have stirred without being seen by him!

Concealment was impossible in that room. There was nothing to hide behind, and it was only twelve feet square.

WHITHER had he gone? With WHOM?

Cahill stood up, feeling giddy and sick; he remembered little of his actions until he had reached the foot of the path, except that he scarcely cared whether he missed or held his footing.

With fierce haste he drew up the boat to fly from this awful Island, where this accursed man dwelt—where Darkness wrought storms of prodigious and unearthly violence, and from which the owner could go invisible at will by invisible aid.

When the currach glided into the cleft he flung up his arms to heaven, and uttered a yell of despair.

The tide had fallen, it was low water, and the top of the mast now rocked ten feet beneath him, as utterly out of his reach as though it lay on the beach of Killard.

Above him was that empty house, more hideous in its emptiness than if filled with the most loathsome things his fancy could realise. Around him pressed the sweet pure air of dawn; before him spread the bland magnanimous ocean; at his back the path by which what might not come? From the edge of the terrace he saw the hand-lines. It was close to six o'clock—not later than eight Lane would come for the fish—if he had RETURNED by that time, and, merciful Heaven! for four hours that mast would remain out of his reach.

CHAPTER VI.

ON THE LEDGE.

DAYLIGHT expanded slowly in the east, and stole softly over the wide waters. The long shadows of the watchful cliffs spread out far to sea. Gulls floated high overhead, screaming to one another at long intervals. As the light broadened, and the sun gradually warmed earth, the faint breeze died away and was succeeded by a breathless calm. The downs, drenched with the rain of the earlier hours, sent up to the unclouded sky a fine thin vapour, which rolled the land in a soft white mist. Earth and heaven were reconciled once more, and appeared by their jocund smiles to be resolved on making amends for the past.

Few of the boats of Killard had been out that night, as the fishermen foresaw the storm. Those which had put to sea steered shoreward early, as the men knew by the flickering light on the edges of the clouds, that a thunderstorm would break before day.

For an hour Cahill scarcely moved. He had allowed the currach to drift out of the cleft, so as to prevent her grating against the rocks. Instinct, rather than any conscious exercise of reason, helped him to that precaution; for he had been almost stunned by the discovery that he could not leave the Island. He sat down with his back to the path. What was to be the next act in this drama of surprises and disasters?

He seemed to lose personal interest in himself, to regard himself as an irresponsible and powerless spectator of events outside himself, as one whose actions had all been fore-ordained.

Looking back through the dim eyes of fatigue and sleeplessness and exhausting terrors, it seemed as though, at the moment he left Casey's house, he had ceased to be a free agent, and had become a mere puppet in the hands of fate. Parts of the night now appeared so utterly beyond belief, that he felt in doubt as to whether he was then dreaming or waking. That midnight voyage, that infinitely laborious landing, that giddy ascent, were too much for credit in sober daylight.

But the storm, the unparalleled thunder, lightning, and rain, coming also into that same past night, made it look more like an unquiet dream than reality. When he reached the supreme wonder of David Lane's disappearance from that cell without visible agency or means of egress, the acme was reached, and all below became unstable, fleeting, scarce worthy of serious dismissal, only matter for the imagination to play with.

But notwithstanding these apparent doubts, these temporary theories respecting the events of the night, Christopher Cahill kept his eyes immovably fixed on the boat, and his hearing attentive exclusively to the path at his back.

Another hour went on without change. The currach rose and fell on the swells beneath, the shadows grew sharper and shorter, a faint breeze sprang up over the sea, and passed freshly through the sunlight which warmed the land.

Perhaps Lane had slept longer than usual, because of the disturbance in the night; perhaps he had not *returned!*

Half an hour more passed away. Cahill's mind was gradually becoming duller and duller. A species of lethargy succeeded the fierce excitement of the last nine

hours. Objects grew indistinct and confused; he no longed retained a clear knowledge of where he lay; now it seemed Clonmore, now Killard. The sense of sight went out of use, and the weary lids fell; but, by a strange exercise of the will, the sense of hearing remained alert and open. As men appoint a certain hour for waking, and wake punctually—as nurses, when watching those they love, will arouse out of the profoundest sleep at a sound which under ordinary circumstances would not produce the least effect upon their slumbers—so the will of Christopher Cahill reached through the dulling influence of sleep upon the senses. He had lost all active use of the senses, but in the case of hearing, as applied to a particular possibility of sound, he retained it in perfect power. While he slept his hearing was awake, and stood sentinel over him.

The man's position on the ledge was not an easy one; he had taken no care to make a good selection. He had sat down just where he had stood, with his back to the path, and a sharp projection in the rock pressed into his back between the shoulder-blades. His legs were gathered up under him and slanted towards the right.

Ah! So he was in neither Clonmore nor Killard, but in a strange dark tangled forest, full of crooked trees and fearful shadows, such as he had never seen before.

No light fell from the sky blinded out by rank foliage; but the trunks of the trees were dimly luminous with a dull red glow, such as that hanging over a large city by night.

Strangest of all, he sat on the trunk of a fallen tree and felt there was something unspeakably hideous behind him, and had no power to turn his head and look. He could not even guess whether it was an unfathomable

abyss, or a wild beast crouched to spring upon him. Something terrible was there—that was all he knew.

He endeavoured to move his arms, but they were pinioned to his side. He strove to thrust out his legs; they were held firmly in sockets; and, on looking down, he perceived that his feet were embedded in the ground.

He would have given all he possessed to be able to get one glance at the thing that lay behind him; but the muscles of his neck were rigid, as though they were stone.

For a while he remained thus; the cold perspiration rolled down his face; he felt it, but could not raise a hand to brush it away.

All at once he became conscious it was no chasm that threatened him from the rear. There crouched a huge yellow, white-fanged tiger, ready to spring upon him and tear him asunder. With a prodigious effort he at last succeeded in releasing one arm.

The spell passed, and uttering a low moan, he awoke and stood up. All flashed vividly back upon him.

He turned his eyes swiftly up the cliff-path, and at the top, against the deep blue sky of morning, the figure of a man stood out in bold relief.

David Lane was looking down at him!

For a moment the two men remained immovable. Then Cahill saw Lane face the side of the cliff and begin the descent.

No haste appeared in the deaf mute's movements. He selected his way as deliberately as though there was nothing to be done of more importance than drawing up the hand-lines and removing the fish. He seemed almost more slow than usual; he spread out the time as a cat delaying to spring.

He had been looking sometime from the top of the Island; had seen the currach and the double mast, and guessed the situation in which Cahill found himself. How long had this man below been on the Island, and what did he know? Had he seen anything? Had he seen all?

Well, anyway he was still on the Island, and could not regain the level land without passing him on this track —and that he never should do.

He had climbed to the ledge by means of the two masts, in the night, near midnight, when the tide was full; the tide had fallen. The masts were now too short, and would continue so until the sun had reached almost its greatest height; there was plenty of time—plenty of time to get down and settle matters with this intruder, whoever he might be; the distance was so great he could not recognise the man.

The matter was quite easy; utterly simple. He should not trouble himself to glance down once; he should not again look at this man until he pounced upon him, and pushed him over into the sea.

Lane's progress became slower. He had two ideas; one to reserve his strength, and the other to lengthen out the revengeful minutes. He felt no passion, but a simple, quiet, full determination to thrust that man into the sea. He never for a moment questioned his power to do so. He was as certain of that as of the daylight and the sea.

In his present frame of mind it seemed to him he could push asunder the rocks to which he clung, or press the ledge itself from its place on the Island.

When he had done his work he should draw up the currach by the rope, and sink her in that cleft. Then

all would be as if no one of the outer world had ever touched the Island save the Fool.

He'd seize that man below by the throat with his right hand, and push him over with his left. He could then sit down on the ledge and watch the end; draw up the currach, sink it, and cast off the line.

No more than twenty feet now lay between him and the ledge. He should pause a minute to be sure of arriving fresh and firm.

Yes, he'd seize him with his hand, and with his hand push, push, push—placing his foot against the solid wall.

How fortunate the ledge was so narrow! Why, if that man below there were a ship he could push, push, push her into the sea!

It might take a little time, but there was no hurry. Now he felt quite refreshed, and would go on.

Look? No, he'd not look. Time enough to look when he had him by the throat! Once the man had been thrust over the cliff, all would be as though no one from the outer world, except the Fool, had ever touched the Bishop's.

He was not now more than his own height from the end of the path.

Perhaps he really had better look, just once; that man might stretch up and catch his feet, and that would not do. It would not do to give that man any advantage; for though it might and need not be done quickly, it must be done very surely. Just one glance.

With a long unearthly scream he threw up his hands, dropped them as suddenly, bent low, and jumped down on the terrace.

He alone stood on it! A hundred yards from the

rock he saw the man in the currach pulling wildly in the direction of Killard. From the terrace hung a few fathoms of line, and at his feet lay the grapling-iron to which it was attached.

When Cahill had seen Lane begin to clamber down, his presence of mind returned to him, as if, by the pressure of terror, a new faculty had sprung into existence. He drew up the painter of the currach, closed his hands over his head, inflated his chest, and plunged headlong into the ocean. He knew that had he attempted to jump into the boat he should have dashed his feet through her frail bottom. As soon as he rose to the surface, swimming rapidly towards where the rope hung, he caught the rope, climbed up the side of the rock, keeping his feet against it. When clear of the water he drew the other end of the rope towards him with his feet. The currach glided near. Cautiously he placed first one foot and then the other in the boat, dropped his body in, rolling over on the thwarts. Instantly he rose, cut the painter, flung out the oars and, laying all the weight of his body in each stroke, was far off before Lane looked around.

'The gun!' Cahill thought, 'the gun!' and worked furiously at the oars.

But no shot followed him, and before ten o'clock Christopher Cahill, limp and haggard, pulled ashore on the beach of Killard.

CHAPTER VII.

MORNING AND EVENING.

ALL Killard was in a state of the highest excitement when Cahill landed. The currach had been missed and Cahill himself also; the general impression was that he had been drowned, for all the other boats had returned long ago. The currach belonged to Edward Martin, the second mast to Maurice Heffernan. When it was discovered that the stranger and the boat had disappeared, Heffernan had come to Martin, before six o'clock, and said:

'Do you know, Edward Martin, that Christopher Cahill, from the town of Clonmore, slept at Casey's last night, or, anyway, pretended to sleep there, took the back room and went out by night, and that one of your currachs is missing, and the mast of mine. He must have stolen them.'

'The currach gone, and the mast? That is bad; but if the currach and the mast and man are gone all together, that is worse, for no man that could help it would have kept the sea last night.'

'And if he's drowned, he's drowned with the sin of stealing your currach and my mast on his soul.'

'He may have stolen your mast; far be it from me to say how it is. But I don't know that he stole my currach. Did any one see him?'

'No. But who else would go out to sea last night in your boat, and never say, "By your leave," to the owner?'

'You ask me what I can't answer to you, Maurice Heffernan.'

'Now, don't you see, he must have stolen your boat and my mast?' persisted Heffernan angrily.

'No! I did not see him.'

'But it's as plain as if you did.'

'Not to me; and, Maurice Heffernan, not to you.'

'Edward Martin, your notions and your talk are foolish.'

'Maybe so, maybe so. Better foolish than worse.'

'But,' continued Heffernan, a little abashed and somewhat overawed, 'I have lost only a spar, and your boat is gone and you don't seem to feel angry!'

'Why should I be angry because my boat is gone? I can't be angry with my boat for going; she didn't go by herself; and I don't know who took it. I'm not even able to guess, and if I was able to guess, I'd rather not do it, as I might be wrong and waste my breath. When I know who took my boat, and why 'twas taken, I shall be able to make up my mind. Good-morning, Maurice Heffernan.'

After the landing of Cahill the two fishermen met again.

'Well, Edward Martin, I was almost right. He took the currach and the mast, though he did not steal them.'

'He did. He stole them.'

'And will you take the law of him?'

'No. He has paid me for the use of the boat and the damage done. But he stole the boat all the same, though he may not think he did. He took my property without my leave and that's stealing, and paying me this morning was only making restitution. He did not mean to do me or anyone wrong, as far as I know. He says he went out just to try a pull by night. It was too late

to come and ask me if he might have the currach, and he got aground on rocks away north, under Rathmore Head.'

'But why could he not launch the currach there as well as off the Slip Rock of Killard, Edward Martin?'

'He tells me he thought there might be sharp rocks that would cut through the bottom.'

'When did he start?'

'At ten, or so.'

'And he got there about twelve?'

'Yes.'

'About full flood?'

'About full flood.'

'And when did he go aground?'

'Then, he says.'

'On the top of flood?'

'I tell you what he said.'

'But he lies; for it's not the top of flood now nor near it; and how did he get off?'

'I did not put that question to him. I tell you all he said. If you want to know more you must ask himself. I know no more, except that the currach was half-full of fresh-water, the rain of the night.'

In the evening those two men again encountered one another.

'I asked him about it,' said Heffernan, 'and he had but a lame excuse. He was never under Rathmore Head by his talk. And, Edward Martin, it's my impression he was on the Bishop's.'

'On the Bishop's!' cried Martin, in unusual surprise. 'On the Bishop's! What makes you think that?'

'What did he want of the two masts? Why did he splice them together? Couldn't you climb by them to

the Bishop's? Couldn't he? And you know he is ever and always speaking and making inquiries about the Island and the Lanes.'

'So I believe,' returned Martin, thoughtfully. Soon after, the two fishermen separated and Edward Martin walked towards home. As he went his thoughts came slowly, as they always did, and to this result:

'Has that man, Cahill, been on the Bishop's, and if so, for what? No good; for no good, I'm certain. He did not go with Lane's knowledge, and I'm sure he went against Lane's will, if Lane was only consulted. He went by night, and told lies when he came back. I don't like this man.'

It was not often Edward Martin's judgment leant so near severity. He continued thinking:

'And, now, after this, when he comes to pay me the hire of the boat and for the damage done to her, he introduces this old man, Heywood, to me and my wife, with some story about my little Mary being like a dead relative, a dead niece of the old man's; and, moreover, he tells me that this old man, Heywood, has made up his mind to change his place of living from Clonmore to Killard so that he may be near my little Mary, and have the comfort of thinking she is the child who is gone.

'I don't like all this. It seems a plan of some kind; but why he should plan anything about my Mary or my place, and why he should be so curious about the Lanes, I have no glimmer of sight.

'What can he want with us? There is nothing dark or hidden about us that he can wish to find out. Nothing like the Bishop's about us.

'Ah! I never thought of that before. The boy, John

Lane, living in my house, and this man Cahill hungry for news. Well, I don't like the whole thing. I don't like plots and plans, and over-inquisitive people. The old man doesn't seem like one who could carry out much of a plot or plan, does he? No. But still I don't like it. Could it be that all about Mary and the dead child is not true? I don't like the look of the whole thing. I wish those people of Clonmore would keep themselves within the four corners of their own town, and not trouble Killard. I wish that, anyway. If this old man stays at Killard, he needn't, because of that, have much to do or say with me or mine.'

Martin was thoughtful when he got to the top of the hill. At the door of his cottage stood his wife knitting. She knew her husband well, and judged him to be now in one of his silent moods. He stood before her for a moment, laid his hand gently on her shoulder by way of salutation, and then passed into the cottage.

The boy was still on the beach with the men. Little Mary sat on one of the chests in the chimney-place; and by the table, his elbow resting on it and his head on his hand, was the bent shrunken figure of the old philosopher. Martin drew back a step in surprise, not unmixed with displeasure.

'God save you, sir,' he said coldly, addressing the old man. He did not like plots and plans, but, at the same time, he respected age and the claims to good breeding of any person under his roof, until that person should be guilty of misconduct.

Mr. Heywood looked up and stared rather vacantly at the tall powerful figure of the fisherman.

'Did you speak?' asked he, in a weak, faltering voice.

'I said, "God save you, sir,"' repeated Martin gravely.

'It is a most beautiful form of salutation. One of the most beautiful. It is not, as no doubt you are aware, universal. In England they say, "How d'ye do?" in France, in the French language, of course, they express greeting in another form, which I cannot recall. It is some time,' he whispered, with a weary attempt at a smile, 'since I have studied the rudiments of the French tongue, and of course the form of salutation is radical.'

'It's a good thing to mention a good name when people meet,' said Martin, with great slowness of speech, 'for it may keep evil from between them. The man who could name a good name, and after speaking it, do a bad action to him he named it to, is a man I should wish to live without meeting.'

Although this speech partook of the nature of an extract from Martin's private unalterable code, nothing but a general statement of an article of a moral law, the tone was such as almost to imply particular application, or perhaps, more accurately, indicated the determination of the speaker to make this idea apply practically, should occasion ever arise. Mr. Heywood saw nothing in the words or manner but an abstract theory.

'You are right,' he said, 'speaking generally of mankind, a name has often more influence than an idea, or a right which requires to be thought over before it may be recognised. I, at one time, devoted myself very much to metaphysics and moral philosophy. We class names under moral philosophy, and ideas under metaphysics. You must know that people, especially the young and frivolous, use words without knowing the exact meaning of them. There now, for instance, is the word idea. It

is a most beautiful and expressive word, and comes from —from—from a foreign tongue.'

He seemed painfully startled at not being able to recollect the Greek, for this was a pet theme of the old philosopher's. In a second he picked up courage and started afresh.

'And one of the first of English philosophers named —named Mill—or was it? No. Strange my head feels tired of looking back at things I know quite well. I have it!' he cried, with a flush of pride on his withered face, 'Locke. You see they are both philosophers, and locks are often on mill courses; that is how I made the mistake. Quite natural, as you perceive. Well Locke defines an idea to be a—a—John Locke— . . . . idea . . . . Pray, sir—I but trouble you with such subtleties?'

'No. I am listening.'

Little Mary had risen, and was setting the supper things on the table. Mr. Heywood followed her faithfully and tenderly with his dim eyes.

'An idea'—he attempted to go on. 'Spinoza defines an idea—did I say Spinoza? But I only trouble you with all this metaphysics.'

'It pleases me to learn,' answered Martin, a little sternly. Could this old man be trifling with him, and was he an impostor? He had often heard of his learning, but he now made little show of it.

'We will then, if you please, sir, at my request, discontinue the discourse. I—I never could collect my thoughts sufficiently for discourse when my little Mary moved about, and I seem to see her once again. Since I saw your child yesterday I seem to grow wearier and wearier of looking back on all I have read. In my little

Mary's lifetime I always felt weary of looking back when she was by. I used to look forward—to look forward then, and then only. My learning, often to my shame I speak it, seemed only a musty hoard of barren skeletons; my Mary—my little Mary, a bright and beautiful volume fresh from God's great hand! I used to sit and watch her, and make up a future for her. I used to see her grow into womanhood; and then I could see her with her baby in her arms, for no woman is fully blest, or fully perfect, or fully beautiful, or fully holy, or fully the sacred priestess of God's noble scheme, until then. I know my Mary is dead, but I think of her when I look at yours. Will you, sir, let your Mary, who is alive, kiss an old man whose Mary is in the grave?'

'Mary, come and kiss this gentleman.' The fisherman had found out he was a gentleman.

'And,' said the old man, rising, when he had released the child's hand, 'I shall go now. May I come again?'

'As often as you please, and welcome, sir.' Martin took the hand of the old man as he stood. 'You will have some supper with us? You must not go from under the roof without eating.'

'You are very kind, but I could eat nothing now. I could not swallow anything. I'm tired, and my throat is very dry, and I want air. Good-night!'

'God save you, sir!'

'God save you kindly,' answered the old man, as he walked feebly through the doorway.

'What do you think of him, Edward?' asked Martin's wife, coming in after the old man had gone.

'I think his heart is right, and when that is so, I trust a man.'

To himself he thought, 'I saw his heart bleed over the grave of that child, and he will do no hurt to me or mine —no, not for all the gold in the world.'

CHAPTER VIII.

A SILLY FAIRY-STORY.

THUS it happened that, in his declining days, Mr. James Heywood, gentleman, hired a room of one of the fishermen of Killard, and came to reside in that village. A great change was observable in the old philosopher. His interest in learning greatly decayed, and his long dissertations disappeared almost wholly. The former bland, infallible manner altered to one of gentle dogmatism, which gradually yielded to assertion, almost timid at times. He also acquired the habit of observing more closely those around him; his interest awakened slightly towards the people among whom his latter days were cast. The humanity of the man broke somewhat through the scientific coil in which it had been wound for years, and the gentleman of Killard changed some of his knowledge for activity of sentiment. The head was going; the heart was coming back.

He became a favourite with the villagers. They, by nature, had a respect and reverence for learning, and the old man's guileless ways won upon them daily. But it was his love of children, and his gentle way of talking to them and of them that chiefly endeared him to those simple people. He seemed never to weary of the companionship of the little folk. In a short time he could call them all by name, and had learned the cottage where

each lived. And yet with all this, save in the matter of little Mary Martin, he appeared to regard children somewhat abstractedly; they were fresh and joyous youth, harmless gaiety, innocent men and women, rather than distinct personalities. He looked on them as a species, rather than as a number of various beings.

But with regard to the fisherman's chestnut-haired daughter, all this was different. He had never been able to dispossess his mind utterly of its impression when he had seen her first. She was to him, in a manner, the little Mary he had lost long ago. The unskilful physicians had slain his darling; and, by some merciful interposition of Providence, a substitute was given to him for his consolation in this far-off time. Accordingly, he could not be too patient in painstaking, or too mild to her. Though she was often even more wilful than the dead child, it never once occurred to him to teach her Greek. All these changes did not arise very rapidly: it was months before they became apparent to those who remembered the old man during his six years at Clonmore.

Every day he came and sat for a while with Edward Martin and his family. Mrs. Martin regarded him as second only to Father Murtagh in deserving respect. His age, and feebleness, and knowledge, all tended to elevate him in her esteem; but his strange attachment to her child lifted him clear above all others, even Father Murtagh himself, in her love. She made the case her own, and supposed that it was her child had died and his niece lived, what would she not have thought of his cruelty if he denied her access to his niece. To fancy he, for no good reason, would not permit her to come and look at the likeness of her dead child—the thought always over-

came her, and she could not refrain from tears; after which she would protest to herself a hundred times that nothing should keep the old man from his only earthly pleasure now. But no one wanted the philosopher to stay away; he came without let or hindrance, and always found a good word of welcome for him, and, still better, smiles.

The boy Lane was very little in the house when Mr. Heywood visited. Night he usually spent out fishing with the boats. Edward Martin, now very prosperous for a man of his class, did not always go to sea, and when he did not the lad took Martin's place, and although some of the elder fishermen grumbled at finding a lad of sixteen over them, they had to admit, even among themselves, that none of them knew better the business of the sea.

The time which John Lane did not devote to fishing or sleep was much spent in the open air, reading the priest's books, or in the kitchen of the priest's house, where he was free to come as often as he chose, and stay till he wished to go.

'That child disturbed his head,' he said, 'and put all his thoughts away; and talked words about nothing, and knew nothing a man cared to know; and wasted his memory by not allowing him to strengthen it with committing verses, an exercise greatly recommended in a book on the mind. He never spoke to her; why did she come bothering him, and asking him to play with her? as if men played like foolish girls! If, indeed, she had been a lady, such as poets wrote about, all clad in white, wreathed in flowers, and carrying a wand, then a man might stay indoors occasionally and ask her what she knew of that which he didn't; what she had seen out there,'

These words had been poured into no human ear, but imparted to the October wind, as it blew seaward from the shore.

'Was he ever to be let away out of this grey green life on the moss, among worthy men dwelling outside the world? The pillars of the great world must be rubies and sapphires and topaz, and not like those red-brown rocks; and in the great world it is always sunshine and the singing of birds.' He paused. A lark was singing right overhead. He listened, and tears came into his eyes. When the song was over, he cried out passionately:

'What is this lark formed of that he can sing so? He seems made altogether of some fine perception of beauty that drives him mad. But I have only that perception of beauty which makes me conscious his imperial beauty lies hid somewhere, concealed from my dull eyes. The lark sees all; I little. Shall I ever see all? and if the lark of this dull shore sings so, how must the larks of the great world sing? and, maybe, if I heard the larks of the great world sing, I should know of a greater beauty than this lark spoke of. Perhaps if I heard a finer songster still, I might be able to reach the revealed, as far as the bird which has ceased.'

Now, this neglect of home most seriously grieved little Mary. In her heart she believed that no one in Killard was to be compared to John Lane. She felt sure he was far cleverer than Father Murtagh and Mr. Heywood in one. Lest she should be accused of heresy and ingratitude, added to presumption and ignorance, she kept this opinion to herself. 'Could Father Murtagh,' she asked imaginary sceptics, 'make small currachs like their John?' and supposing for a moment, admitting for a

second, the absurd supposition that the priest could make the currachs, 'Could he please,' she asked in all meekness, because she was certain of an overwhelming victory, 'Could he make oars and sails and masts for those currachs as John had? were not those very same currachs the wonder and admiration of all Killard? and had not a distracting rumour reached the village that one of them, which John had given to a young boy, had been sold for five silver shillings in the wise vast town of Clonmore, where everything could be got in shops. But these currachs were, seriously, as nothing.'

Think of the wonderful day of happiness she had spent beside John when he fashioned that marvellous bedstead for her rag doll! Yes, after all, the day so spent by John, was more miraculous than the bedstead itself, though all had said the bedstead's likeness had never before issued from human hands. He had never sat a whole day indoors before; and if he had had a cold and was forbidden to go out, what had that really to do with the matter?

Had not he sat in the chimney-place, she on a stool, that one there with the big chip out of it, helping the great work?—yes, helping; for she had fetched and stirred the glue, and he had allowed her to drop one large bead of glue on a joining when he could not remove either of his hands from the pieces of wood he held. And had she not plagued her mother until her mother taught her to knit, and then she made that quilt for the bed? For some reason or other the quilt was all in puckers and would not lie flat; but who cared for that if it kept her doll beautifully warm, and was, moreover, part and parcel of, or at least a necessary addition to, the bedstead; no one had ever seen a bedstead without a quilt.

Why wouldn't John remain some time in the house, and not be always going out to sea or to read? It was those books did it all. Yes, they solely were to blame for John's absence, for of course every man must fish, but no other man in the village gave up his spare time to books.

Then again, why was he so universally contemptuous to her? She could do things he couldn't do, and often mended his clothes when they wanted it, and often even when they didn't, and he could no more set a stitch than she could handle one of the great heavy oars. Why would he always call her 'child,' now that every one else said she had grown such a big girl?

It was all the work of those hateful books. He had never spoken of any big girl mentioned in one of those books. They were all fearful accounts of hateful places far away, and wars and deserts and villages, that had water-streets and red men and poetry, and such things that never were anywhere—that was, at least, anywhere anyone went to, Killard or Clonmore, for instance.

Why Jos, poor old Jos, was a thousand times kinder, and sat by her, and followed her, and lay in her lap ever so long, and purred when she rubbed him and rubbed his poor old nose against her hand, which sometimes frightened her when he did it suddenly in the dark, coming on her unawares. She hoped poor dear old Jos would never learn to read those abominable books, for, if he did, then all would be over, and he'd never do anything but sit on a chair near the candle, with his shoulders stuck up, reading away and turning the leaves over with his paw, after first wetting it at his mouth. And he'd never come and sit beside her, and he'd hiss if she rubbed him, and scrape if she took him in her arms; and as to

frightening her in the dark by putting his cold rough nose in her hand—never ! never ! Oh never !

And here the poor little maiden would break wholly down, and cry at the heart-rending picture her imagination had painted.

But it was John's contempt for her, first because she happened to be a girl, and second because she knew nothing, that stung her most of all. She often thought over the distressing situation, and at last she resolved to consult her friend the old philosopher, because she felt assured he knew everything, and because he never retailed anything that others said to him, and he'd speak to no one about the sad matter. So one day, when they were together, she introduced the subject covertly to him.

'Mr. Heywood, would you tell me what is in books ?'

'Oh, my dear ! that is a question I could not answer in a hundred years,' he replied with a smile, taking her hand and stroking her chestnut hair, and looking sadly and fondly into her eyes. 'There are books that deal with almost every subject in the world.'

'And are there books about all kinds of people ?'

'Yes.'

'Men and women, and fishermen, and learned men and clever people ?'

'Yes. They are called biographies, or lives.'

Her hopes were rising.

'And are there books about girls of twelve ?'

'Eh ?' he said, looking at her with a puzzled expression.

'Are there books about girls of twelve years of age ?'

She was very earnest and very eager.

'Girls of twelve,' he muttered, considering the question. 'Well, I don't exactly know. You see, my dear,

girls of twelve are not very interesting from a scientific point of view; and up to that age they generally do nothing that would make a man write their history or biography. There was Joan of Arc, but she was more than twelve, I think, before she became famous. Yes, more than twelve. You see, girls of such an age are uninteresting to writers, as a rule.'

'Ah!' she thought, 'he says the same. Then, why do you like me?' she asked boldly, looking straight into his eyes.

'Because—because, my dear,' his voice shook a little, 'you remind me—you are very like some one I once knew.'

He had never told her of the dead Mary. He did not wish to sadden her with such a tale.

'And is this the reason?'

'Yes, my dear.'

'And if I wasn't like that person, you wouldn't like me a bit? You'd stay away all day and read books in Father Murtagh's kitchen, and do everything, and never care a bit for me?'

There was sorrow and indignation in the tone.

Mr. Heywood was rather confounded and perplexed by this question. He summarised it, and answered widely:

'It is most likely I should not have taken enough notice of you to love you as I now do, my dear, only that you reminded me of someone.'

'Then,' she said, dropping her eyes and her hand and drooping spiritlessly, 'I know why our John doesn't like me. It's because I don't remind him of one he knew long ago.'

She had betrayed herself, but the old man only smiled;

he was thinking of that someone long ago, and her words reached inattentive ears. The talk of books with her worked strangely in his mind. He remembered how he had led another little girl to read abstruse sciences, and how sometimes he found out she had put away the books of his selection and taken up some idle fairy-tale. Ah! if she might only come back again he should never think of chiding her, even in Greek, for such a transgression. She might read what she chose, fiction and fairy-tales.

Somehow he did not feel as though he should now go on with her education. He could take her little hand in his and walk with her along the beach, explaining matters to her, and that would be better than books. She should have lectures for instruction and books for pastime, if she could only come back to him. Ah! he awoke from his dream and looked down.

'The person that you remind me so much of, my dear, was very fond of reading books, books for people of her age,' he murmured very tenderly.

'And are there books for girls of twelve?' she asked rapidly.

'Yes; there are books for girls of twelve. I did not think of that kind of book a while ago. They often contain something about little girls.'

'Oh, how I wish I had one!' she cried, clasping her hands and looking with full sweet blue eyes into the old man's face.

'But you can't read, my dear.'

'No, but I'd do something with it if I had it.'

'You shall have one, little Mary. You shall have one.'

She put her arms round him, and kissed his worn cheek.

The old man kept his promise, and in less than a week she got a brand-new copy of 'Cinderella.' With the greatest secrecy she placed this book where she knew John would be sure to find it as he went to bed. Next morning when she came out, she found him looking at it. She grew scarlet with excitement, for now surely he would not be so scornful when he saw something in a book about a girl of twelve.

'Whose is this?' he asked.

She had been secret so far, because she did not feel certain he would look at the book if he knew 'twas hers. But now she might speak out.

'Mine,' she answered timidly, examining his face for symptoms of reformation.

'But you can't read,' he cried slightingly.

'I got it for you, John.'

'For me!—for me? Got such a book for a man! Why, do you know, it's a silly fairy-story that no one but a child would care to look at? It's not true, not a word of it.'

Poor little Mary! Her fine plot had failed miserably, and, worse than all, John was more scornful than ever. To think that all her book about a girl of twelve was lies—lies! Oh! it was too bad.

After a space of grief she suddenly sprang up, left the house, and sought the old philosopher.

'Can girls read like men?' she asked breathlessly.

'Yes, my dear.'

'And they can read men's books if they're taught?'

'Certainly.'

'Could you teach me?'

'If you wished me to do so. It is not very interesting at first, but afterwards it becomes so.'

'How soon could I learn? How long would it take before I could read like our John?'

'That would depend greatly on yourself.'

'Will you teach me, and begin to-day?'

'Yes, my dear.'

She would learn to read, she thought, and read the books he read, and all in secret, and then some day or other, some day of purple triumph, she would speak to him of matters in the books he read, and he would be astonished; then he'd have to talk to her about these matters; perhaps he'd sit and make a car for her dolly, while they both spoke of those things hidden away between leather covers.

CHAPTER IX.

JOHN LANE WANTS TO SEE.

THAT night on which Cahill visited the Bishop's Island proved too much even for his resolution. He introduced Mr. Heywood to Martin and Martin's daughter, and leaving him in Killard—for the old man had been easily persuaded, once he saw and spoke to the child—Cahill went back as quickly as he could to Clonmore. Even on the way he felt far from easy; the dumb man might at that moment be on the road, following him, or in advance of him.

It might be that Lane did not recognise him, but then he had only to come to Killard and learn all. This was a most disquieting reflection, and worn out as he was, he kept his eyes busy with the road, now this way, now that, until he arrived at the town. On finding himself once

more in his old familiar room his alarm abated, and, yielding to his exhaustion, he threw himself on his bed and slept soundly and dreamlessly until night.

When he awoke it was too late to think of going out, and even if it had been earlier, he did not like the idea of risking an encounter with that man. Why Lane had not brought his gun with him down that path, Cahill could not understand, but he might at this moment be opposite his window with the weapon, or was he in reality obliged to use any obvious and vulgar means of chastisement against him? Could not the Power which helped him to disappear in that awe-striking manner, help him also by invisible and superhuman agency, not only to a knowledge of who the intruder had been, but also to some hideous form of vengeance? This was the most alarming of all thoughts; better, a thousand times, an infuriated man with a murderous weapon than an invisible and supernatural form of destruction.

He arose, stole softly to the window, and peered cautiously into the street.

Not a soul in view.

This negative evidence went far to confirm his worst fears. Anger would reach him in no usual way.

After a long period of agonised care he became somewhat more reassured, for it suddenly occurred to him that although several hours had passed since his visit, the operations of Darkness had not been employed against him.

Lane was not the man to delay work in such a matter, and if Darkness moved at all, it moved with the swiftness of thought. But no sooner had Cahill dismissed this idea, than the picture of Lane with his gun arose once more to his mind, and then suddenly he determined on

his course. He should fly—fly for the present, no matter whither; leave Killard and Clonmore far behind him. Shut out the scene of that night's adventure, put many leagues of ground, perhaps the sea, between him and the county Clare; then, when the freshness of late events had passed away, he could return. That was the best thing to do; so, when morning came, he left Clonmore, resolved not to come back for some months, perhaps years.

But the bailiff's son need have been in no fear of Lane's pursuit. The deaf mute, now knowing that a landing might be effected at any moment on the Island from the sea-face, would not have left the place on any terms whatever. He would have given up all short of the Island itself, to have that man for five minutes close to him; but much as he thirsted for vengeance, a sense of prudence governed him, and he remained.

But he adopted additional precautions. He left the Island as seldom as possible, and the faithful Fool once more was much with the lonely man. Moreover, Lane, at the expense of many weeks of toil, cut in the path a perpendicular space of upwards of twenty feet. At the top of this he affixed a rope whereby he himself could descend and ascend, always drawing it after him when he came up. Thus an additional barrier was placed between the sea and the surface of the Island.

The autumn passed into winter at Killard without affording any new excitement. The Fool had confirmed the suspicion that Cahill had visited the Island, and the villagers learned the flight of the bailiff's son. All this was a great assistance to gossip, and the incident served for anecdote, and afforded matter for comment by the turf-fires in the chimney-places.

The inhabitants of Martin's cottage went on in much the old way except that little Mary, who, unknown to anyone but her instructor, was laboriously studying the art of reading. There was no lack of diligence on her part, but she was not very quick to learn. She was obliged, moreover, to carry on her perplexing and apparently endless introductory studies, at such times only as she could be alone in the house, which were few, or when she could steal forth by herself, and in the shadow of some huge rock, draw out the magic primer and wonder when she should be above the elaborate difficulties found in 'words of three or more syllables.'

Her progress was very materially retarded by the mode of instruction followed by her preceptor, for not only were the spelling and pronunciation of words to be learned, but, collaterally, their origin and places in grammar.

Once again face to face with study of any kind, some of the old man's former prolixity and infallible dogmatism returned. She had often an exhaustive discourse on the origin of the very letters which made up the alphabet. Then she would hear of how the original meaning of words had, in the process of time, been contracted or expanded in their significations. Affixes and prefixes had to be thoughtfully considered, and the Greek augment discussed in relation to our letters of euphony. Reduplication in Greek was not only a great subject in itself, but the etymology of the word afforded a text for supreme reflection.

So that often the patient little spirit became very way-worn before the harangues were finished. If one could not read before knowing all this, and if learning to read were only the first step on the way to acquaintance with

such matters as John knew, what a terribly long, dull road was before her.

However, she kept resolutely on, and towards the close of the year had made sensible advances and mastered the whole threepenny primer, besides having a large, ill-assorted collection of distorted facts about the Greeks, Romans, Chaldeans, Egyptians, and other peoples and their languages, not one of which facts tended to place either those peoples or their languages high in the love of the little maid. The only grain of consolation she had gleaned was that those peoples were all dead and gone for ever, and their languages no longer spoken by man.

This last fact elevated man as he is in the student's mind. Who could have borne with such people and their hateful languages, constructed apparently for no other purpose than to stand between young people and English, which they had such a great desire to master.

But if the heart of little Mary was somewhat consoled and cheered by the assurance that she was soon to reach her goal, although she was informed it would prove no more than a starting place, she was greatly troubled about another matter.

John Lane—their John—had his mind more firmly than ever set upon going to sea, going away to look at the big world and see some of the places he had read of in his books. His talk, and it grew gradually less and less, was all about this matter. Edward Martin and the lad often spoke of the subject, and by degrees the elder man came, not only to consent, but to approve.

'You are young,' he would say; 'you are at the beginning of your life, and the sea is an honest and honourable way of getting a living; and though we shall all miss

you, I don't know of any reason why you should not have your wish. You might stay at home and mind the fishing, and when I am gone, manage the boats for those I leave after me; according to nature I am the first to go, not taking the dangers of the ocean into account. But if you go away for a while, and come back, you'll find this door open to you, John, and you can then stay and fish the sea all the same as if you had never left, that is if you find it for your welfare to do so.'

'If I go,' cried the lad enthusiastically, 'I can live, and at the same time see the world. If I stay I can do no more than live from day to day.'

The fisherman regarded him gravely for a moment, and then said:

'John Lane, if you stay you can live and do your duty; if you go you can do no more, no man can.' He paused a while and then went on: 'For reasons we do not know, your father cast you off when you were a boy; he has never sought to see you since; nor could any of us, do all we might, bring him to consent to see you or take you back, or look upon you in any way as his son. You are, therefore, your own master, and if you do go,' he laid his hands on the lad's shoulders, and a gleam of solemn deep affection shone in his sad eyes, 'when you come back you will find this home open for you as it has been these many years; and, my boy, whether you go or stay you will always have a home in our hearts. Let that thought come to you if ever you are tried or tempted to forget God.'

'I hope, sir,' said the boy, with a tremor in his voice and tears in his eyes, 'I hope, sir, I shall never disgrace your bringing up.'

'John Lane,' replied the fisherman, still more solemnly,

'never disgrace yourself. You may not always be thinking of your bringing up; but you will never be able to get away from yourself, and the best company any man can keep is his own good self. Remember that, my child; no saint can be in better company than his own soul, if he feels his own soul is as good as he can make it, with the help of God.'

In the end it was all settled he should go. His plan was to start for Limerick, ship as boy on a coasting vessel there, and if possible re-ship for Liverpool or London; from either of the latter ports he could find a vessel bound foreign.

They were all very sorry to lose him; Mr. and Mrs. Martin tried to look cheerful on the day of separation, but little Mary could not keep back her tears; she wept all through the morning, and when at last it was necessary for him to leave the house she burst into sobs. This rather shook the lad; he was in angry fear lest he too should break down. He turned to her and said sharply:

'Don't be a silly girl. Girls always cry for nothing. It's so foolish.'

The words stung the little maid and she instantly stopped, saying in a choking voice, 'I can't help being a girl; but I can help crying, and you're very cross.'

As he was bidding her good-bye, after saying it to her father and mother, her artificial firmness got very unsteady, and furthermore she felt the ribbon round her neck so tight that she had to untie it and take it off, which scarcely mended matters with her.

'Good-bye John, and come back soon, won't you? Don't stay long away; and when you come back maybe you won't find me so ignorant—for I'll be able to read, perhaps.'

'There, there, you're a good little child, and won't you do everything your mother tells you while I'm away, and —and—and——'

She held up her hand with the ribbon, 'Take this for a keepsake, our John.'

'What nonsense!' he cried, quite huskily. He looked down. 'It's just the colour of your eyes, Mary. There, don't cry. I'm not a bit cross with you, dear Mary. I'll take the ribbon.'

He stooped down and kissed her, and then, showing his face no more to those he was leaving, ran away down to the village, acting no better as he went than the little maiden when he had called her a silly girl the moment before.

CHAPTER X.

CHESTNUT TO GOLDEN.

It was a dull house when John Lane had gone. Although of late he had spent very little of his waking hours within its walls, it had seemed much fuller and warmer than it did now. The lad's darkness and impetuosity made him always interesting, even when he was not agreeable. It was something to sit and think he might come in soon, and by some miracle or other be in a friendly humour. Now even a miracle could not give his footstep to the threshold. It was very good, of course, to have father and mother as of old, but then of old they had their John as well, and the house seemed very dull and lonely now.

'Poor old Jos! Poor old fellow! Our John never cared for you or for me. Lie still, old Jos. Our John

never cared for either of us, and now he's gone away to sea, and we may never see him again. He might have cared a little for us, just once before he went.'

In a week they received a letter from the lad. The most important passage ran thus :

'I am here in Limerick still. The place did not surprise me as much as I had expected. After the cliffs and islands of Clare, the houses, even the largest churches, including the cathedrals, one of which is not quite finished, seemed small. I went to the theatre and saw a play, but had to leave before it was over. Most of the actors said one thing with their mouths and another with their bodies, and I got confused.

'I have signed articles for London. I go next week in a brigantine. People swear here more than at Killard. Sailors drink a great deal, and are careless, as I have read in books ; of the last I have bought some. I spend little money, and have three pounds left out of the five I started with.'

Then came a passage of no importance :

'Tell little Mary that I've bought a purse for my money, and that I keep her ribbon in it.'

'Little Mary,' was not yet, alas ! able to read writing, so she heard her message from the lips of the old philosopher. When the contents of the letter had been three times related to the family, and the family had begun to discuss its contents less frequently, Mary took the letter and hid it under the quilt of her doll's bed. There was no idea of replying. The people of Killard looked on letters with awe. No post office was in the village. The letter had been addressed to the care of a shopkeeper in Clonmore.

From London another note arrived. The lad, after

some delay, had succeeded in finding a ship that matched him exactly. She belonged to Melbourne, and had lost her boy by desertion in London. She was chartered on the round, and had yet to go to China before returning to Australia. At Melbourne the crew would be paid off. Nothing could suit the wishes of the boy more fully; he might go from Melbourne to the diggings. One might spend a lifetime at sea and never make as much money as in a lucky month up there. Then followed much about London and what the lad had seen, but the people at the top of the slope didn't take much interest in the descriptions. The boy was going far out of the reach of home voices or home influences, and it was doubtful if ever they should look upon him again.

All this chimney-place talk of Edward Martin and his wife, fell very sadly into the ears of their daughter, and often, when it was dark, tears rose silently, for though the little maiden was usually gay and light of heart, when sorrow touched her it ate deeply by the force of contrast. Her father and mother knew of the boy's resolution to make money if he could, and to make it by venturesome ways. They discussed his chances at the diggings, and dilated on the rough habits of those places, until Mary's heart sank altogether and she sat dreaming of deadly encounters, her imagination filled with pictures of dire results. A month passed and brought no other letter; he must have sailed. Then a darkness gathered round him deeper than the darkness of the grave.

Month after month glided uneventfully by. Matters went on much in the old order, save for the loss of the parts contributed by the lad. Mary kept on diligently at her books, and had now fully conquered the difficulties of reading, and was launched on a whole book, and that

one no less recondite than the fifth reading-book of the National School Board, specially recommended and obtained by Mr. Heywood because of the elements of natural philosophy to be found therein, one-tenth part of which was dimly comprehensible to the little puzzled head. But then incomprehensibilities were simple in the book compared to the wild entanglement in which Mr. Heywood's explanatory lectures left them.

One, two, three, four whole years passed, bringing neither the lad nor tidings of him, and Edward Martin often speculated aloud as to whether he had met with accident or misfortune. Mrs. Martin spoke sadly of him and wondered if he had forgotten them all. If he had not and was alive, why did he not write? He was not ignorant like the other lads of the village, but could put his ideas into language on paper, and they could read them, at least Mary could read the letter to them. A letter coming to them towards the close of the fourth year, would have been a sealed book if they had no one to help them but the old philosopher; for the sight had faded out of Mr. Heywood's eyes, and all who knew him said he was sinking fast. His science was now quickly leaving his mind, and as he drew towards the shadowy portal behind which his long-lost Mary stood awaiting him, his affection for the living Mary increased, and he could not bear her to be out of his presence. So she spent much of her time with him, talking or reading to him; when his strength decayed and he could no longer go out, even if guided and assisted by her, she came and sat with him most of the day. All the people praised her greatly for this, saying, 'A sick room is only a dull place for youth and high spirits.'

One day, as they were together, the old man said:

'Mary, I don't think I shall last very long. I am quite an old man now, and my vital power is spent. As far as I could see my way I have tried to do right. I did my best for the little Mary before you, dear. Since I have known you I have tried to do my duty to you, by imparting such instruction as befitted your age and condition. Of course it could not be expected that I should be able to make you reach the higher branches; but as far as I saw my way I did my duty.'

'Indeed, indeed, sir, you did more than your duty. You owed me nothing whatever. I know I have been a great trouble and worry to you, and I ask you to forgive all the trouble and worry. I'm so sorry.'

A little sob of penitence and of regret for him came in here, and she thought it better to stop.

'I have nothing to forgive. You may have been a little wilful now and then; but you did your best in trying to learn, that's the chief thing. There is another matter I wish to speak about. What o'clock is it?'

'Just twelve.'

'So early! How strangely long the days grow, and the nights still longer. But how can the days and nights be both growing long? They seem to have stretched out ever since I came to lie down altogether. Both have not grown long, Mary dear?'

'No, sir, only the days. But it may seem long to you in the night, because you sleep so little.'

'Ah, yes,' wearily, 'that may have something to do with the lengthening out of time. I'm sure I must have read long ago, perhaps in my little Mary's days, an account of such a thing, but it is dim now. What I wanted to say to you is that if my little darling—I mean my first one, for you are very dear too—had lived, and I had died

before her, I should have arranged that her future might be as well provided for as if I had lived. Now I own less than I did then; but what remains shall go to you, who have been the only happiness of my latter days; there is no relative of mine left alive. No relative—not one.'

Later he often spoke on the same subject, and when one May morning they entered the room and called to him in vain, they found all as he had promised Mary.

Four strong men of the village, Edward Martin being one and Maurice Heffernan another, carried the coffin to the churchyard through the sweet May sunshine. As they lowered it into the dark dull grave a lark sprang up close at hand, and sang out blithely in the pale blue sky. Although they had come with hearts sad enough, for they had grown to love the grey withered old man, and his gentle ways and his interest in their boys and girls, they could not but raise their eyes and follow the swift erratic course and listen to the wild melody of that unintelligible rapture. For a while they stood idle, throwing no clay over the clay, but listening and trying to see the rapidly fading bird; nor did they lower their glances until the songster had wholly disappeared in the light. Then some one threw a shovel of earth on the coffin. Again all paused to listen. They were well-accustomed to that untranslatable song, but the great final fact of life in which they were engaged made the lark's notes start out into vivid relief against the background of death. What brilliant utterance of unstained joy! What mystery of inscrutable sorrow!

'Like the voice of an angel,' said a woman to another who stood by.

'Ay! Singing for joy that he has met his little Mary once more.'

The people came away quieted, as though they had seen what the woman had said, and afterwards they often spoke of the old philosopher who had died among them; but they never uttered his name without thinking of his dead darling and the lark's song in the sunlight of that day.

Mary Martin was very sad when she turned out of the graveyard. The way of life appeared to be rapidly narrowing. Already two beings on whom she had allowed her heart to dwell had passed beyond her view. It seemed as though henceforth she could do nothing but sit and wait for still more awful ravages of time. How long would it please Providence to leave father and mother to her? And when they had gone what should she do, alone, unfriended, without sister or brother, or relative of any kind? Her mother had been an only child, and her father's people, if any still lived, of which he was doubtful, dwelt far away, near the great city of Dublin itself, where no simple village girl could hope even to go in search of them. But stay! Perhaps it would please a merciful Providence to take her first. Ah, that would be better! So much better! Yet wait a moment. How would it be with those left behind when she had gone! Ah! that would never do. They would break their hearts, poor mother! poor father! What a world it was! Things were no sooner arranged so as to satisfy than they began changing, and changing, and changing until everything was wrong again. Would that some settled order could be relied upon! But not here. That was what we should enjoy hereafter. She could not bear to go back to the house just now, so she walked slowly and sadly up to the downs, and selecting the nook which had been a favourite haunt of the absent boy's, sat down with her face towards the calm blue sea.

At Killard, spring brought little more with it than long days, warmth and sunshine. There were no level fields of young green corn, no rose-trees, no flowers or plants before the cottage doors, no waving woods, no pipe of thrush or whistle of blackbird, no chirp of robin or sparrow. Nothing but short, stiff grass could grow under the sea-mists. The swallow and the lark found their way there, the swiftest traveller of the air, the sweetest messenger of music. Even in summer there was something forlorn and desolate about this part of the coast of Clare. But the majestic front of embattled cliffs, and the monotonous splendour of the loud rolling ocean, lifted the thoughts above the want of woodland beauties, which would look in presence of this primitive grandeur to be no more than trivial detail.

Mary's eyes rested on the pale sea, and gradually, as if borne down by the impressive persistency of the long regular swells, her spirits sank below any depth they had hitherto reached. No definite images were in her mind, but a deep desolation of melancholy gathered all round her. It appeared as though she were fated to be the only wanderer in a silent, trackless, shadeless desert, and as if she should so wander all her life long.

The villagers who had been at the funeral gradually dispersed, and Killard assumed its ordinary dull-looking aspect. The women knitted, or scoured their pots and pans, or washed at the open doors; the husbands mended their nets, or sat talking to one another and smoking in the sunshine. All at once there arose a sudden stretching of necks and questioning. A car had driven up to Pat Casey's house, and a stranger had gone in. Presently the stranger came out, looked deliberately round the one street, and began to ascend the slope of the southern downs.

Who was he? No one knew. Perhaps some gentleman come down for a day's fishing or sailing. He'd be a welcome source of profit to someone, for times were not very good just now. Rather a fine man to judge by his back, square-shouldered and light of limb.

He went up the hill as freely as though it was the level beach. He must be going to Martin's. Someone about the old man's property, no doubt. Ay, that was it. There, he has gone into Martin's now. An attorney, any one could tell by the look of him.

But he had come out again. Where was Edward Martin? Down on the beach spokeshaving that mast, his wife sitting on the edge of the currach mending that sail. But it couldn't be the Martins he wanted, after all, for he had turned away from the village and disappeared on the downs. He must be only a sightseer who went in to ask the way. It was, perhaps, as well after all; it would look bad for an attorney to be so condescending as to come to poor people like the Martins, though they were the best off in the village, and now the daughter had property. How lucky she was!

The stranger went only a little way, approached the head of the cliff, looked down, and started back, saying to Mary:

'I beg your pardon. Do not let me disturb you.'

She had risen. She was about to leave the place.

'I beg of you,' he said, 'not to go. I will go instead.'

They both stood still looking at one another. She did not wish to enter into conversation with a stranger, and he seemed so polite and kind that she did not like to pain him by making him think she had been driven from the place by his approach.

She saw he was a hard-featured, handsome man with

very large dark eyes, a short glossy beard and moustache. His face and hands were quite brown.

'What hair that girl has!' this man thought. 'I don't remember ever seeing such perfect golden. Then she has those wonderful blue Irish eyes that people not of this country so rave about. She's tall, too, and in a few years her figure will improve much. She's too thin now. Who can she be? She does not belong to this place, I'm sure. I'll try.'

'Do you know this place well, may I ask?'

'Yes. Very well.'

'Do you live here?'

'Yes.'

'But you are newly come here?'

'No. I was born in this village.'

'And have lived here ever since?'

'Ever since.'

The man examined her very closely and somewhat suspiciously.

'Do you know any one here of the name of Lane?'

'I know David Lane of the Bishop's Island.'

'Any one else of that name in the village?'

'No. No one else.'

'But he has relatives in the village, or somewhere about? Has he not?'

'No. He has no relatives.'

'No relatives!' in astonishment. 'But I heard he had a son, and it's about that son I've come here.'

'Oh! yes he has a son, but he turned him away when he was young, and he's left Killard, the son, I mean, this long, long time.'

'Ah! How strange you should say that a man had no relatives, and yet you knew of a son of his.'

Mary did not care to go into family matters with a stranger, and she was little disposed to talk at all after that sad morning. But this man had spoken of their John. Could he know anything of their John.

'Did you know John?' she asked.

'I came over here about him to-day. I want to see some friends of his, the Martins.'

'Oh!' she cried, turning eagerly, 'I'll show you the house. I'm——'

'Thank you,' he interrupted her, 'please do not disturb yourself. I've been there. I found no one in.'

A great light of interest was now in the girl's face, the blue eyes shone and she shook back the golden hair from her white smooth forehead, and white round neck, as she spoke in glad haste.

'Come with me, I'll show you where father and mother are.'

'But—but may I ask who are you?'

'Mary Martin, the daughter of Edward Martin.' She was in such a hurry to be off, she had gone a few paces, crying: 'Come on; I'll show you where they are.' She did not notice his start or his looks of incredulous astonishment.

'A moment!' he cried, 'a moment.' She returned unwillingly. 'But I understood Mary Martin had chestnut hair?'

'She had, but it faded to yellow since John went away. Won't you come! You can't believe how much they will like to hear all you have to say.'

He did not move, but stood with his eyes very steadily on her. She kept her glance fixed on the way she was in such haste to go.

'Stop a bit,' he said, 'I'll tell you one thing about John Lane before we set out—I am he.'

She sprang from his side, and raised her face and hands and looked.

'You?'

'Yes.'

'Our John? But you're not a bit like him. I can't believe—oh, no! You are only joking, and it's a cruel joke.'

'Well, Mary, there's your ribbon, and here's the purse I bought in Limerick.'

He held both up.

'Oh, John! oh, John!—our John!' she cried hysterically, as she flung herself into his arms, 'you are so changed!'

'And so are you. Mary, you have grown to be very lovely. I never could think it.'

'But I'm a woman now.'

'And I'm a man. And, Mary, the change has improved you so much. You don't seem to think I'm changed for the better?'

'I don't know yet, John. It's all so wonderful and so good. Oh, come to father and mother! They will be glad.'

And away these two young people ran down the slope, and through the village towards the beach.

The self-same lark that had sung the requiem over the old philosopher was now high in the heavens again, but the ears of the two, as hand-in-hand they flew through the street, were dulled with the hurry of happy thoughts, and they did not hear the raptures of the bird.

This lark that had sung for the return of a wanderer from the skies, a while ago, now sang for the return of a wanderer from the seas.

CHAPTER XI.

A SUMMER SAIL.

THAT evening a long talk was held on the bench outside Martin's cottage. The villagers had learned who the strange man was, and came to welcome him home, and hear accounts of foreign parts. All were astonished at the alteration in John Lane. He had left Killard four years before, a long, lank, awkward, uncouth, abrupt, gloomy, taciturn lad; he had come back a broad, bronzed, bearded, handsome man. That was wonderful. But more wonderful still was the change in his manner. Now he was full of animal spirits, could make a joke and take one, told stories that caused the solemn, sad-mannered fishermen to laugh, and sang a song composed by a fellow-digger, for he had been 'up after gold.'

He had seen a great deal of life in those four years, and, young as he was, his quick impulsive nature had penetrated the heart of the world, and he knew man pretty well now. He had spent the latter two years in the gold-diggings, the former at sea. He had not learned to despise mankind or scoff at the world. He held that both were good in the main; bad only, as it were, by unlucky accident.

While a boy he had been greatly addicted to extreme ideas; as a man he had learned moderation. He did not laugh at the world, or sneer at it, or praise it rapturously; but he laughed rather han carped, smiled rather than sneered, and praised as much as he could.

Although only twenty-one years old in years, he was thirty in knowledge, and knowledge had not saddened or

depraved him. He put matters to himself in a figurative way; he generally thought figuratively, and often spoke so, when he had an audience he liked.

'I shall,' he said to himself, 'laugh rather than weep when there is no harm in laughing and no virtue in tears. If there's a sunny and a showery side to the road, I'll walk in the shine, when there is no harm in the sun, no virtue in the shower.'

'And tell us how you get the gold out of the mine?' asked one of the fishermen that evening.

'Well, you see, the mine isn't a very splendid place by any means. Where I shovelled was a narrow strip of sand at the side of a hill. We dig up the sand, put it into a gourd, tin pail, bucket, old boot, what you will, and then wash it until all the sand is gone and all the gold is there.'

'And all the gold is there!' repeated the questioner in reverential awe, as though he stood in the presence of the gold, and found in it a very close resemblance to Lord Clonmore and Father Murtagh in one, and felt bound to call the yellow metal, 'Your Reverend Lordship,' or by some other compound acknowledgment of his own abject inferiority.

'And are you never robbed?' inquired another.

'Sometimes. Not often. It's an unpleasant and unsafe line of life, that of digger-robber. You see this,' he pulled a revolver out of his pocket. 'You see that chimney-pot on Fahey's house? Now watch!'

He raised his arm and fired. The women screamed at the report.

'You can't see much of that chimney-pot now, can you? Well, every man sleeps with his gold near him, and if another man comes wanting his gold, why, he

generally gets lead instead, and lead inside the skin is neither wholesome nor pleasant.'

'John Lane,' said Edward Martin, very seriously, 'I hope you never did any harm to anyone with that thing in your hand?'

He regarded the weapon with an expression of the strongest disapproval.

'I'm afraid, sir,' Lane began and recommenced. 'You must take everything into account, sir—the time, the situation, the temptation.'

'I don't know anything about what you are speaking of; but *did* you ever do any harm with that thing?'

The listeners waited impatiently and somewhat nervously for the reply. They had no liking for that weapon, and they by no means relished the idea of this young man, with his light notions of life, sending bullets flying around in that way.

What a strange fancy for firearms ran in this family! No one else at Killard ever had a firearm, except these Lanes. If he had shot a man out there, they should be very sorry, for they rather liked young Lane, now that his ways were pleasant and wholesome and free.

In answering the question, Lane hesitated a good deal.

'Well, sir, to tell you the truth, I—I don't pretend for a moment to say I was justified in what I did, but I'll tell you all about it.'

The villagers gathered closer round. Martin's eyes were sternly fixed on the young man's face; Mrs. Martin waited in breathless expectancy; and Mary looked as though she should sicken at the details of the revolting deed. He went on:

'You see, although I had no very strong grounds for

distrusting the man, still I didn't like the look of the thing, and the only time I ever did any harm with lead was in this way. I was sitting one evening, and all at once I began thinking of my old dislike; I looked suddenly round and down. Right under me! "Ah, by Jove!" said I, "here's a chance," and I raised my arm and fired.'

The people shuddered.

'Well?' said Edward Martin.

'Well, cried the young man, starting up and pointing towards the village, 'and I hit and smashed Fahey's chimney-pot, but upon my honour I'll buy him a new one when I go to Clonmore.'

The women laughed, partly at the relief and partly at the joke; the men smiled and felt a little betrayed, yet young Lane's light and joyous manner had won the people, and when the little meeting broke up the neighbours said nothing but good words of the returned exile.

Mary could not yet decide whether the change in John was for the better. One John had gone away, another had come back. Somehow it seemed as though there was no possibility of deciding the question. One thing, at all events, seemed quite certain—it was a most wonderful improvement to have him back again.

Ah! if Mr. Heywood had only lived to meet John! It was so great a pity that the good kind old man should have left them for ever on the very day their John came back. Whether John's personal appearance had improved or disimproved might be subject of doubt; there could be no question of the improvement in his manner. How gay and light-hearted and pleasant he was. He would not shun her now, or give her cross words, but would sit and tell all about foreign places, all about his

adventures and the wonderful land of gold from which he had so blessedly returned. It was so good to have him back again. Of course to-morrow would be a fine day.

And with such happy thoughts, now and then sobered by recollections of the sad morning rite, Mary Martin—no longer little Mary, but tall, fair, golden-haired, blue-eyed Mary Martin—went to sleep.

The next day Tom was despatched to the Bishop's Island with news of the son's return; but he came back with sadness in his face, as far as sadness could be expressed on his dull, impassive countenance. David Lane was as resolute as ever in his determination not to see his son.

'We cannot help it,' said the young man, on hearing the Fool's report. 'Why he should have such a horror of me because I am not like him, afflicted with deafness, I cannot understand. It must be some superstitious idea communicated to him by my old grandfather.'

For weeks the bright days went rapidly by for Mary Martin. She could not realize how she had passed her time before John's return. When he came into the room, the very chairs and table became different. There were also other changes which were visible to her, but over which she spent no thought. Of old, he had shunned her, and she had sought him; now he sought her, and she, as it seemed unwillingly, and in obedience to an impulse she could not account for, drew somewhat back. But they were much together. They walked along the cliffs and down the beach; and one day, when he had been about a month at home, he took one of her father's currachs, and made her go with him for a sail.

The bay and ocean, the ragged bar and the yellow

beach, were drowned in the rich warm light of June. The blue water leaped and danced and sparkled, showing a thousand mirror-facets of silver to the sun. The white foam rose and fell softly against the warm brown rocks and cliffs. Not a cloud was in the heavens, and a light, sweet, cool, salt, sea-breeze crept over the long even swells of the Atlantic daintily, as though it knew what atonement it should make for its present silence, when it got inland among the green woods and rustling orchards.

The wind blew from the sea, and a currach cannot tack, so John Lane had selected the very one in which Edward Cahill went to the Island by night. He pulled out a few miles, keeping the girl interested with his travels and adventures in distant lands. The strange sights he had witnessed in China, and the exciting incidents of his Australian life kept Mary alternating between wonder and fear. She had read his old friends, the books of travel, and knew something of China, but nothing of the newer land; even when she did happen to know a little, it was so astonishing to have before her a man who had seen those things. It was so much better than a book. She could question him freely and fully; and it was, best of all, that he was—John.

When they were about three miles off the land, he ceased pulling, and put the boat about. Then the two sat in the rounded stern on the sail spread over the frame, for there was no thwart. Disposing of the weight in this way caused the bow of the currach to rise out of the water, and the hollow, thus exposed to the sea-breeze, acted as a sail. An oar thrust over the side did duty for a rudder.

'What a delicious, lazy, good-for-nothing life I'm

leading now, Mary,' said the young man, stretching himself luxuriously, and drawing his hat down over his eyes.

'Yes; but, John, you worked very hard while you were away, all those years.' Her hands were clasped in her lap, her elbow rested on the gunwale of the boat, and her eyes were fixed sadly on the water running by.

'No, not very hard—that is, of course, plenty of hard work had to be done; but then, when you have the music of big excitement and a panorama of new scenes for accompaniments, you don't feel fatigue.'

'I suppose not, John.' The voice now showed a trace of the sadness. She thought, 'Was he already tiring of Killard and them?'

'For instance,' he said, 'one evening, just as daylight began to fade, and it doesn't be long about that kind of thing there,' he swung his arm out until it lay parallel with the southern shore, 'I was half dead with heat and a heavy hot day's work. I was on the point of giving over. "Well," said I to myself, "I'll turn one more shovel, and leave all ready for the first wash in the morning." The shovel scraped against something, and when I turned up the sand there shone a lump of gold as big as a sprat. Yellow gold, Mary, shining in the light.' He looked towards her and dropped his arm,—'Yellow gold, just the colour of your hair.'

The hair was blowing freely in the breeze below a linen sun-bonnet, pulled down over the face until the white neck was visible under the deep limp curtain behind.

Oh, this gold that he was always dreaming about! This gold, which in some unknown way kept his father's heart, too, would it be the cause of any injury to John, as it had been the curse of his grandfather and father?

'Then,' she asked aloud, 'did you get much for that piece, John? It must be exciting.'

'Well, I worked with two other men; we worked the same claim, and went equal shares. My share of that nugget was four pounds—four pounds for turning one spadeful of earth! Why, no currach with four men ever had such a take of fish as that nugget in a single night.'

'It's very, very wonderful, John! And was that the biggest piece you ever found?'

'Yes. The biggest piece I ever found. But Bill Hartley, the Englishman, found a bigger, and I got six pounds for my share of that. We were very lucky—very. Every one said so. Do you know I have a good deal of money now, Mary? Guess how much?'

'I couldn't, John. You know I couldn't.'

'A thousand pounds.'

'A thousand pounds! A thousand pounds!' in amazement. Then, with a glad, quick look at him, 'Why, you can live like a gentleman all your life now. Can't you, John? That's more than all Killard ever had. Killard! why, there isn't as much in Clonmore, and—and tell me, is there more in Limerick?'

'It is not so much as you think, and there are single shops in Limerick with ten times as much in them. It sounds a great deal of money in Killard; but in the world it isn't a drop, and no man could think of settling in life on it.'

'And—and?' she began, with tears in her soft blue eyes.

'And in a couple of months I'm going back again to get more.'

'Oh, John!—Oh, John! you won't—you won't go away again?' and she covered her face with her hands, and sobbed hysterically.

'Yes, Mary,' he said very tenderly, 'I must go away again to get more gold the colour of your hair. I must get all the gold I can the colour of your hair.'

'I hate gold,' she cried passionately; 'and if my hair is the colour of it, I'll cut it off, every bit.'

'Don't do that. But cut off just a tiny piece and give it to me, and I'll keep it with the ribbon you gave me last time I went.'

'No. I'll give you nothing if you go away. I'll give you anything if you stop.'

'Don't cry.' He put his arm around her, and drew her very gently towards him. 'Don't cry, Mary; and when I come back next time I'll give you a great big share of the gold I bring; and, Mary, darling, all my heart, my love.'

'I don't want your gold, and I don't think you can bear the sight of me. I do believe you went away because you hated me; and if you go again, I'll think the same, and worse. Oh! it will be ever so much worse, after—after——' She broke out into sobs once more.

'You do not quite understand me. Let me say a few words. When first I went away I don't think I cared much for you, but somehow, I didn't throw away that ribbon. As time passed, and a little home-sickness came upon me now and then, I began to think more tenderly of Killard, and all the village people, and your father and mother, and you, Mary. At last, I don't know how it came about, but I began to imagine you grown up when I returned, and all at once, while I thought of you as a big girl, a woman, it seemed as though I should be very kind to you when we met. So the matter lay in my mind for a long time. Then, as I

grew nearer to a man, I often asked myself, was anything further likely?'

She had ceased to cry, and had taken her hands down from her face, and was looking at him in wonder, as though she could not believe he had troubled himself so much about her while he was away.

He took her hand and drew her still closer to him.

'And when I got home, and, finding no one in the house, ran up to my favourite nook just to have one look from the dear old seat before going to the village to ask about you all (for I had firmly resolved to make myself known to no one until I had spoken with my first friends), I found a tall, fair girl, very beautiful and lovely indeed, in my old place; I did not know Mary. Since then, I have learned to know a later and a dearer Mary; a Mary so sweet and precious to me that I often think I am just a little mad about her in my heart. Will this second Mary have this new John when he comes back again?'

'Have!—Have? I don't understand. What do you mean, John?'

'Will you, my own darling Mary, marry me when I come back?'

'Marry you, John!—Marry you! Oh!'

She endeavoured to cover her face, not for bashfulness, but for amazement, and that she might try to think; but he held her hands.

'Yes, Mary, you will, darling; and I'll try to be very good to you; as good as ever I can be. Say "yes."'

'But, John, I never thought of such a thing. Indeed —indeed I never did once.'

'You will think of it now, Mary, and give me an answer before I go.'

'I—I will.'

He drew her towards him, and kissed her. She was white, and trembling violently. He held her, and strove to lessen her agitation.

'Let the thought lie in your mind, love, and it may grow sweet to you; and that is what I should most like of all things in this world, that the thought of my love for you was sweet to you, and made you happy. Will you try to let the thought please you?'

'I—I will.'

CHAPTER XII.

THE RIBBON AND THE EYES.

THE long bright summer days slipped rapidly by, and Mary kept the idea of John's love in her heart until it grew to be part of her nature, and affected every thought and action. To be with him all her life, to have him continually at her side, to be able to see him, to speak to him, to hold the first place in his regard, to share all his thoughts, his joys, his sorrows; to be one with him in all things, and to be of some service or comfort to him—Oh, delicious dream! What dream had ever girl dreamed equal to this one? None! none!

And then it was no dream, or if it was a dream now, it would come true some time. Some day they would meet, never to separate more. But between this and then lay a long, dark, dreary track of lonely desert on which her new-risen sun would never shine. It was too bad, too cruel. John was rich—richer than any man she had ever known; it seemed as though Lord Clonmore himself could be no richer. Could not John be satisfied. And then she herself had money too. She was the best

dowered girl in Killard. Why could not John be satisfied to stay and live like a gentleman at Killard? He could have the best house in all the village, and books, and they could always, every day of their lives, go about in the sun as they had the day before, as they had that very morning.

But John had told her they should be poor as they were. Poor! who was richer than they? and how could they, even if they tried, spend all that John had and all that she had, put together? Father had said he feared this love of gold had come down from father to son, and that no amount of money could ever satisfy this dreadful craving once it took hold of some men. She did not think her John loved only money, for while he was away, the whole time, had he not always had some book near him that he loved, and had he not in a way, too, loved her, though not as he loved her now, he said? If he loved her as she loved him, how could he go away from her? Leave her, do without her, when there was no reason but this desire for gold-getting to urge him? She would gladly go with him among those wild diggers; anywhere, so that she might have him at her side. Who could fear while he was by? But he had said no. The life would not suit her, and he should work all the harder if he felt he were working to win her. He had talked of taking her to London when they were married; of showing her that great city. But she did not want to see it. She should rather stay with John, in Killard, or go with him among those rough gold-seekers, than see the whole world and have him not near. Why did he so want to get her things she did not care for, and steal from her the thing she valued above all price, his dear company? But he must know best, and she must hide her sorrow as she could,

for the sight of it would pain him, and John must not be pained though she should die of grief.

He had bought her a great store of books, stories, poems, novels and histories, and he had said that if she only opened one, when she felt lonely, the time would pass more quickly, and he should be back sooner than she could now believe. But he did not feel as she felt, or he never could imagine time would pass quickly while they were apart. And, ah! when John was gone, John who seemed to have been given to them, given to her in this strangely beautiful aspect in place of the kind old philosopher who had been so good to her, and had so laboriously taught her that she had surprised John with all she knew—when John was gone away how she should miss the good old man, who had been like a kindly grandfather to her for years!

Often, at night, Mary dreamed and wept as the time of parting approached.

At length the day was at hand. Mary could scarcely hold up her head. She burst into tears at every sign of his departure. The packed box, the oil-coat, the canvas bag, each was eloquent to her listening heart. She could not endure to let him out of her presence a moment, and yet the sight of his preparations wrung her young heart. The father and mother now knew how matters stood between their daughter and John Lane. When he had first spoken to them, shortly after the day in the currach, there was a strong objection on Mrs. Lane's side, and a grave demur on the father's. In the heart of the mother shrank a cowering fear of his race, and the father, though holding the young man in high esteem, could not disengage from his mind the thought that John Lane was a rich man, that this love of gold could do no good, and

there appeared much reason to fear it might lead to harm. The young man had pleaded long and eloquently, and at last extracted a promise that no other suitor should be urged upon her until his return; he was prepared to abide their decision until then, if they would allow him to woo her while he was in Killard. To this, after some time, he won their consent. And before a month had elapsed from the day he had first spoken, Mary had told him she no longer had any doubt of her feelings towards him.

An outside-car had come over in the morning to take the young man and his luggage to Clonmore, whence he was to proceed by public conveyance to Limerick, and start thence to London, at which port he had secured shipping.

'Shall we go and sit the last half-hour, Mary, in the place I first saw you when I came back,' he said to her when all was done.

She rose and walked silently up to the downs, and the two sat in the little hollow, facing the ocean. For a long time they were silent. His hat was drawn almost over his eyes; her sun-bonnet concealed her face. One of his arms clasped her waist; in the hand of the other he held both her hands. Her heart was too full for words; no words could measure her sorrow. He spoke first:

'Mary, some men in my position would think, "Will she always remember me so as not to let any one else steal into her heart?" Some women in your place would think the same of me; but I am not dreaming of such a chance; it is impossible with me, and impossible with you.'

'Oh yes, John. I never thought of such a thing; it never could be.'

'No; never!'

There was a long silence. The young man felt that something should be done, if it were only to drive the thought of parting away from the gentle girl's heart. She would have plenty of time for silent sorrow when he was gone.

'Mary, when I went away, the ribbon was exactly the colour of your eyes, and when I came back the colours were still the same; but, Mary, now there is a change.'

'A change, John! How, a change? In which?'

'The eyes.'

'Have my eyes changed since you came back?'

'Yes; they were a clear bright blue, darling, the first time I saw you sitting here, grown up. But since then they have lost much of their blue, and now shines in them—when I look—a violet flame, the love-light, Mary; the sweet, pure, warm love-light of my Mary's heart.'

She released her hand and put her arms wildly around his neck, crying into his ear, 'Don't go, John; oh, don't go! Stay with me! Stay with your poor Mary, my darling!'

He trembled all over. She had never before so utterly shown how he had wound himself into her heart. But in a moment he gathered resolution.

'It will not be for long; and when I do come back I'll never, never leave you any more. But, now, good-bye. Good-bye.'

'Don't go. Ah, don't go away from me, John, my own John!'

He released himself from her arms, and rose gently. 'Stay where you are, Mary. You would only break down if you came to see me off. Good-bye, darling, good-bye.'

And he was gone.

Gone away from her; he who had filled her heart with such delicious sweetness; he who, years ago, had gone away a dark, uncouth boy, and came home a light-hearted and handsome man; he that had come home seeming, at first, a stranger, and in a few brief, bright months left her; left her, taking with him her heart, and soul, and life, and all the brightness of the air. Oh, desolation! Oh, dreary, love-lorn, desert life! Oh, sea and sky, and clifts, shorn of object or meaning! What was to become of her? And oh, terror in grief, what might not become of him!

Mr. and Mrs. Martin, and many others of the village, came to see John off. At the last moment Edward Martin took the young man aside and addressed to him a few pithy morsels of advice. In conclusion, he said:

'You are going now, John, and you are a very young man, and I'm told there are great temptations in the life of young men down there. Take care of yourself and do not forget us, and do not forget her, or what is between you two, you and my only daughter.'

'Sir, when I was last time away I always thought of you if anything came to me that should not. I had you and your good wife with me ever in my mind to keep me right, and I did no great harm. Now, sir, I have more to take with me than last time—I have Mary. I shall take her with me in my mind, and her goodness will be my safeguard. I feel nothing evil could come near me while I think of her, for I should not be able to look in her face as she stands at my side.'

'Well, I do not quite see what you speak of; every man has his own way of doing things; but you will never do wrong if you take time to think—it's not thinking does mischief. Good-bye, John Lane; good-bye, my

dear boy, and when you come back, if God spares us, you will find a warm welcome.'

Mrs. Martin wept, and others of the women wept also to keep the good woman company. John kissed her and embraced her, shook hands all round, and springing on the car, cried out in a husky voice, 'Go on, driver!' and, keeping his face from the people, was soon out of sight.

In a few days matters at the cottage on the southern edge of the downs returned to their old order, and there was no sign that the wanderer had come and gone, save the books he had bought for Mary and presents he had given to the man and woman of the house, and the weary vacant yearning in the heart of a girl.

Months glided uneventfully by in Killard, and the talk about John Lane gradually died out, except at Martin's cottage, where hardly a day passed without some affectionate mention of the young man's name. Of late years John's father had been seldom in the village; the Fool did Lane's marketing. Lane sent very little fish now for sale, and beyond the purchase of a few absolute necessities of his frugal life through Tom, he had scarcely any dealings with the world; once in a way the deaf mute went to Clonmore, but this was at long intervals. As far as the neighbours heard of Lane from Tom, the father was living in his old way, except that he had grown more careless of the fishing, and had abandoned rush-weaving altogether.

One gusty afternoon, towards the end of November, a group of fishermen were standing in the shelter of a wall smoking and talking over their perils and profits, when a man appeared, descending the road from Clonmore.

'None of the men is gone to Clonmore?' asked one, on perceiving the man.

'No! And besides, he's not rigged up like one of us. He's someone belonging to the town.'

They continued to watch the man as he drew near. When he had reached within a hundred yards, the first speaker said:

'No; I can't make him out; and yet I seem to remember his walk.'

'God save you kindly,' saluted the unknown man, coming up.

'The same to you, man, and welcome,' responded the fishermen, looking narrowly at the other. Then all at once the fisherman cried out:

'Ah, I thought I knew something of him! Why, it's Christie Cahill, that went away long and merry ago. And how are you, Christie Cahill?'

'Finely, thank you; finely; and how is all Killard?'

'Killard is much the same, thank you for your asking; and how have you been all these years, and where did you come from?'

'My health has been in good keeping; and I come from the town of Clonmore.'

'Well, we are glad to hear your health has been in good keeping; but most of those that come by that road travel from Clonmore, and I was wanting to know where you spent your years.'

'Oh! I was here and there, here and there.'

'That's a place there's plenty of elbowroom in, and no mistake. Wasn't there any clergy there to christen it?'

'Upon my conscience, it would take a wise man to remember all the places I travelled since I saw Killard last. I was in Limerick for one, and Kilrush for another, and Ennis,' answered Cahill, a little sullenly.

'It's a good bit since you were here last. A queer

visit you paid the evening before you left for foreign parts. Are you going to see any of your friends on their own estates this turn?'

'Whist! and don't be talking, Andy Brenan,' returned Cahill, a little ruffled. He evidently did not care to be reminded of that adventure.

'But I was only asking a civil question, and meant no harm,' pursued Brenan, with a malicious wink at one of the by-standers. 'I thought you might be disposed to take a bit of a row by night, and call on old friends. Why, that's only manners, Christie Cahill, and you won't go back of your bringing-up now that you've been half over the world, will you?'

'There now,' said the other, doggedly. 'I like your joke very well, but don't give me all the fun, and keep none for yourself. You'd better save a trifle of your fun for a rainy day.'

'Well, no offence, any way; far be it from me to show bad breeding to a man fresh from his travels in heathen lands, where there was no clergy to give the parishes names. But did you leave herself at Clonmore, Christie Cahill?'

'There now, leave off, and tell me the news.'

'But do you mean to say you went through all those wonderful heathen places and never married a wife or two?'

'That'll do now for you. Leave off. It's you ought to be telling me all about the old place, and the old people. Maurice Heffernan, tell me the news, and take this man's face off me.'

'There isn't much news you'd care to hear,' answered Heffernan, 'but old Mr. Heywood is dead and buried, and John Lane came back from the gold-diggings and is gone out there again.'

'I heard so at the town.'

'Well, there isn't much more to tell of late—that is, that you'd care to hear, I think. To be sure, there's changes in all of us, and few of us have grown younger or handsomer.'

'I bar that,' broke in Brenan. 'There's Mary Martin coming down the hill, and I leave it to Christie Cahill himself to say if some of us haven't to thank the time you were on your travels for good looks.'

The young girl was stepping quickly down the hill. against the breeze, her hair streaming behind her in the wind.

'That's never Mary Martin, Edward Martin's daughter?'

'Well, she's the only child of Edward Martin, and she doesn't look very like a son, does she?' asked Brenan.

'In all my travels, I never saw her equal.'

'Look at that now; even the heathens couldn't match her! And, Christie Cahill, don't you find some of us improved now? She's a lady as well as pretty; old Mr. Heywood left her all his house-property in Clonmore.'

'So they told me; so they told me. Oh! by all the saints, she looks like——' The girl was now close, and he did not finish the sentence. As she smiled and said good-day to the men, Cahill separated himself from the group, and stood in the way of the girl. 'Tell me,' he said to her, 'are they speaking true—and are you Edward Martin's daughter?'

'They have spoken truth—I am.'

'Look at me; take a good look at me, and say can you tell who I am?'

She gazed fixedly at him for a few seconds and then cried, as she held out her hand to him:

'Of course I can; Christie Cahill! but you are a

good deal changed. You have grown stouter and older-looking.'

He hesitated a moment before taking her hand. For the first time in all his life had he felt thus; what ailed him? It seemed as though it could not be, he might touch her hand. At last he did, timidly, saying in a voice of great humility and softness:

'I'd never have known you, Mary Martin, never! I —I'm very glad you look so well.'

Then came some words between them of father and mother and the old philosopher, and finally a promise that Cahill would take supper with them that evening.

'Why, Christie Cahill, the girl has put the heart across in you,' whispered Brenan, as she walked away.

'No, no! Don't be always at your jokes, like that. I'd never have known her, never.' Wonder was uppermost in his mind, and perceptible in his tone.

'Well, a likely young fellow like you couldn't wish to know a likelier girl than golden Mary of Killard, could you?'

There was a laugh in the group of men, for Cahill was no longer young, looked more than his years, and was in no way handsome or fine.

He did not take the least notice of the irony, but said:

'Good-day, men,' and walked off, with his eyes on the ground, no longer in their old way exploring everything on their own level.

'Mary Martin,' he thought; 'and this is Mary Martin! Such a change never came in all this world before. Oh, never! She looks like an angel.' He thus finished mentally the simile he had begun a little while before in speech.

As he had promised, he went that evening to supper

at Edward Martin's house. When the meal was over and they were all gathered into the chimney-place, and the fire was brightened up, and fresh sods put on, the talk went back to the old philosopher; and Edward Martin dwelt long upon his gentleness and goodness, and told how he had taught Mary book learning until now she could read and write, and was the most learned person in all the village, except Father Murtagh, and old Billy Quann, he who now did all the clerk's and sexton's work at the chapel on the hill.

Cahill sat opposite the girl, regarding her in a dull wondering doubt. He could not get his slow mind to believe that this young girl was the same Mary he had left a few years ago, he could not realize the fact that he was there seated in the presence of this girl, and finding this strange something all round the room—all through his mind. Other women seemed made of ordinary flesh and blood, were stout or thin, tall or short, red or yellow, fair-haired or dark, ate and drank, talked, and passed him by as he passed them, with a casual glance of indifference.

But this tall, lithe, low-voiced girl was not of such material or nature. His eyes wandered to her and lingered on her face or figure, bringing away no definite records of line or hue, but exploring curiously, amazedly, timidly. If he looked down the curve of her cheek a hundred times he still knew nothing of her cheek's form, but must look again, feel himself expanding with surprise, and when he had finished, no wiser than when he had begun. He liked to see her move, hear her speak, but he found it hard to bear her eyes, and he would not have touched her if he might. Should he ever give up this unusual, unintelligible wondering?

Edward Martin had no great liking for Christopher Cahill; the day on which he found out that Cahill had taken the currach he had put the bailiff's son down as a man not to be admired. But, no doubt, Cahill did not regard the matter in so serious a light as it struck him, and then the fact that he had introduced to them the old man who had been so kind and good to them, and that Cahill had been away for some time, weighed with Edward Martin and helped to dull his dislike.

It was late for Killard people when Cahill rose to go. He said he should most likely stay a few days in the village.

'You're not thinking of going to the Bishop's again, I hope?' asked Martin.

'Oh! no!' he answered in a decided manner, as if he were quite sincere.

'Because harm might come of it. Lane is a man who would not stop at a trifle.'

'I'm not going near him, you may be sure of that.'

'If I were you I'd give him a wide berth in the village, should he happen to come down while you're there. The Fool thinks that to this day it would be bad for you to meet him. Lane knows you were on the Island.'

'Never fear. I'll not knowingly cross his path. Good-night.' And he left the house.

He could remember Martin's face, and his wife's face, as he went down the path, but by some strange fatality, the face of the girl had completely faded from his memory, and he could recall nothing of it.

'It's queer,' he thought, 'it's very queer how I can't bring her face to my mind, and I'm not bad at remembering faces. Why is it, I wonder? I wish I could re-

member her face, ever so little. I know it's lovely, but no more. If I see her to-morrow I'll watch her closely. I only lost my time this evening. More fool I. I'll watch her closer to-morrow.'

He did see her next day, and watched her long and intently, but at night he had no picture.

'It's the very queerest thing I ever knew,' he thought, with a sigh. 'But I must take a better look to-morrow. I was quite careless to-day.'

CHAPTER XIII.

'ALL SETTLED.'

For a whole week Christopher Cahill continued in a state of great bewilderment over this girl. Between looking at her without thought, when he was so fortunate as to be in her presence, and trying to find out why it was he could not recall her image when absent, he allowed no time for any consideration of his own condition. He wondered at her beauty when near, and at his singular forgetfulness when away.

The subject of Mary's engagement to John was never introduced at Martin's cottage, and as Cahill had kept himself rather aloof and suddenly became possessed by a great love of solitude, except when he could be in her presence without attracting attention, he had not heard of it from outside sources.

One night he was taking leave of the Martins when his coat caught on a nail in the door, and was torn slightly. He made little of the accident, and said it wasn't worth thinking of.

'But,' said Mrs. Martin, 'you're not in such a hurry

that you can't wait to have a stitch put in it. Here, Mary, your eyes are a trifle younger than mine, and I'm beginning not to be able to do dark stitching by candlelight.'

'Oh ! I couldn't think of troubling——'

'Trouble !' cried Mrs. Martin energetically, 'it isn't a bit of trouble. Tell him so, Mary.'

'Indeed, it isn't any trouble, and won't take more than a minute or so. Do let me, please?' the girl said.

He turned and looked at her in a dazed way.

'And will you mend my coat for me?' he asked, as though he was trying to reconcile the apparent inconsistency of her being such a source of wonder such a mystery to him, and yet willing to sew up a rent in his coat.

'Yes; of course. Turn about, and hold the candle there.'

She had already brought needle and thread. It was necessary for her to stoop a little, and bring her head somewhat close to his side. He could see by the light of the candle, the fresh pure forehead, and the mist of golden hair that brushed against his well-worn coat. He was conscious that the instant her fingers touched his some change arose in him. It no longer appeared that she was anything unintelligible, or of a different order, or a subject of surprise and chill delight. There she was stitching his coat, as the plainest girl in Connaught might; touching his coat as any other girl in all the world might. She was nothing more than any other girl, only that she happened to be the prettiest he had ever looked upon.

As soon as the tear was made whole, he said:

'Thank you, Mary,' in a slow full voice, shook her hand and left the house.

'Now,' he said to himself as he went, 'I know why it was I could not recollect her face, because I wanted it for ever; because Mary Martin will be my wife, no matter what may come. I'm well enough off to keep a wife, and old enough to marry, and I'll marry her. Of course Martin and his wife will be only too glad. I'm no bad match for Mary.'

When he came even to the thought of her name, his whole nature softened, and he mused, 'And, Mary, I'll be good to you, I know I will. I'm not much to boast of, no doubt, but you could make me a good man. I'll try to be good for your sake. I'll give up all my bad ways. I'll—I'll burn the paper that keeps sin always handy at my door. I'll banish David Lane and his money from my mind, and I'll take you away to Clonmore, and live an honest-minded life. I swear I will.'

Into the dark self-contained monotony of this man's life a warm and vivifying ray had at last penetrated. Up to this, the unaccountable circumstances hanging round David Lane and the Bishop's Island had fascinated him wholly. In his apparently stolid nature there lay an uncertain and tremulous apprehensiveness which made him liable to be carried any length by a current of thought, once it set in. His mind was utterly without balance; he either took no interest, or became fully absorbed. In the subject of the Lanes, and their inexplorable history, there had been much to excite the imagination and sustain the interest.

If Cahill had spoken his mind freely, he could not clearly tell why he had felt so absorbing a desire to penetrate the shadows surrounding the deaf mute, and his history. He would have run any risk to find out the secret of the Island. In him there was an impelling terror

in his very ignorance of the secret which tantalized and goaded him beyond the power of his own regulation or control.

Now he suddenly found himself divested of his old curiosity. His mind could admit of but one leading idea. Of old it had been the mystery of gold, and now it was the mystery of a girl; the mystery of her face and form, and voice and youth, and subduing beauty. He was no longer a young man, but up to this he had been heart-whole; now his entire strength gave way before this girl, and he flung his crude, headlong nature before her, and worshipped in an agony of love, as he had formerly wondered in an agony of fear. The Lanes and their secret possessed no more interest for him than the flight of that curlew, or the dashing of those waves.

Respecting himself, he was candid enough to himself. He did not think he was handsome, or clever, or good in any great degree. He told himself that in all those respects there were better and worse. He knew he was a plain ignorant man, without a very strict code. Religion entered scarcely at all into his scheme of life. Not that he was a sceptic—he did not doubt; he was superstitious, and said to himself that he was not good enough to attract the attention of Heaven towards him, lest his backslidings might suddenly be recollected and dealt with. He held the idea that it was best to slip through life, attracting as little attention as possible either among men, or at the other side of the visible.

But now, when he had discovered he loved this girl, he would yield to no man in the intensity of his love.

'If she asked me,' he said to the ocean, 'I'd go over that cliff; if she asked me I'd do murder; if she asked me I'd take to saying my prayers again.'

Though he said these things, he felt it was certain she would not ask him to do the first or the second, and that she certainly would ask him to do the last, if he won her. Here was a huge fascination. To be good at her bidding. To have her taking a deep interest in his welfare. Perhaps, to have her arms around him, and her voice in his ears, whispering:

'Do, Christie; do so for your own sake and for mine.'

Oh, intoxicating picture! Why, he could tear down solid rocks with his naked hands if such a goal lay behind them; he could swim to that ship on the horizon, he could fight an army, he could pray to God!

Pray! Could it be that prayers were sometimes heard, and visible, tangible responses sent from Heaven? Did the Powers above really hearken, and were there cases where the thing asked for was given? He had heard of thousands of such cases, and even it wasn't always good people who prayed and got what they asked for, but the bad as well. And if he tried to pray, tried to pray even now, bad as he was, would his prayers ascend; might he be listened to with favour? Ah, no! He had been too long a stranger and was forgotten. Then all at once he remembered the case of a poor publican who had bent his head and struck his breast and acknowledged his unworthiness, and was commended above another who had told only of his good actions.

He looked around. No one was near. Falling upon his knees, he bent his head. He remained thus without motion for a short while, then springing to his feet he raised his arms and looked towards the dull grey sky with an expression of wild despair.

'I have forgotten!' he cried. 'I have forgotten! It's

so long since I prayed that God has taken the words out of my mind, and I can't remember one now; now in my sorest need! Now, when I am willing to try and use them, to try and be good!'

He ran along the downs until his breath failed him; then he flung himself on the ground, panting and purple in the face.

Up to this he had preserved his secret most jealously. He had not allowed it to appear in his words or manner. In Mary Martin's presence he was reserved and taciturn. Beyond the fact that he kept his eyes as much as possible on her, a close observer could detect nothing unusual in his deportment, and no one at the cottage had noticed this. It had never occurred to him to make love to her. In her presence he was altogether absorbed in contemplating her and trying to realise a delicious future. But that day on the downs decided him. He'd wait no longer, but rescue himself from the sea of doubts in which he found himself struggling for hope, for existence.

Next day he met her alone on the beach, and said:

'Good-morning, Mary. What a blustery day it is.'

'Yes—very,' answered the girl, looking out to sea. She was going up from the strand. He saw her turn.

'Mary, are you in a great hurry?' he asked, in a low gentle voice.

'No; not very great.'

'Well, would you walk a little bit down the beach with me? I,want—I want to say a few words to you.'

She turned and walked at his side. For a while he said nothing; then he spoke:

'This is a blustery place, this Killard, Mary.'

'It is, in winter time.'

'But I suppose you like it?'

'Oh yes; I like it very well. Why shouldn't I?'

'But you wouldn't care to live all your days here, would you? You'd like a little change now and then, and maybe wouldn't object to staying some time in the town of Clonmore?'

'To be sure, there is more on view in the town, but I like Killard well. Of course, I'd like to see the wonders of big towns; but I must wait for the right season.'

'That's it!' he cried eagerly; 'you must wait for the right time; ay,' he added, very softly, 'until someone comes and takes you away with him, after putting a gold ring on your finger, for you'll have a gold ring, and no mistake.'

'But you had something to say to me, Christie Cahill, and what is it?'

'I am coming to it, Mary.' How those eyes, which had been so long restless explorers of the horizon, now dwelt on her! There was a passionate entreaty in his regard which made the girl wonder what it could be he had to speak to her about. 'It came into my mind,' he continued, after a pause, during which he was running over all the chances against him, his plain appearance, plain figure, unhandsome reputation, and age. 'It came into my mind, Mary, that you might not object to live in Clonmore; you could come and see your father and mother as often as you liked, you know.'

'Someone must have told him that John thinks of taking me away from Killard when he comes back,' she thought, 'but why is he speaking to me about this?' Then, aloud to him:

'I believe I'm not to live all my time at Killard John says when he comes back he'll take me to London even.'

'John? Who's John?' His eyes had now fallen from her face and were resting on the ground.

'Why, John Lane, of course.' He was never very bright or very sharp, but she wondered at his increased dulness to-day.

'John Lane,' he muttered to himself. 'John Lane; ay, John Lane. But he won't be back for some time. I mean, before he comes?'

'Oh, no! I don't think I could; how could I? Besides, I don't think he'd like me to do it.'

'And what reason could he have for disliking it?' He could not at all understand why John Lane's name should be brought into the matter. Why had she said John Lane, and not her father?

'Of course you know.'

'Not a bit.' He stood still, but never raised his glance. 'Tell me?' He seemed to feel through a curtain something which he knew would shock him dreadfully when revealed.

'Why, it's all settled between—between us. I thought you must have heard.'

'What's settled between you and John Lane; that's the question I'm asking you?'

The girl blushed, shook her head, and with a low laugh cried out: 'Go to the village and ask, they'll tell you all about it,' and ran back—as fast as she could. She had got a glimpse of his drift, and thought this the best way of setting matters right.

He did not raise his head for a little while; at last he looked round very cautiously as though the something he dreaded lay in sight. No, and yes. There was no new fact or form—so far all was well; but she was gone! and the yellow sand looked forlorn; he felt as though hope

were retiring afar off from him and covering up her face.

He drew a long breath, shook himself, and started at a plodding pace for the village. At the same plodding pace he walked up the street and entered Casey's shop. Nellie Casey was behind the counter, with her hands on her hips waiting for business or talk. Cahill stood before her, his eyes cast on the ground :

'Tell me, Mrs. Casey, what's the talk I hear of something between Mary Martin and John Lane, that's away at the gold-diggings ?'

'Is it about their going to be married when he comes back ?' the woman asked in return.

'I daresay that's it ; but I didn't hear of it until now. It's all settled, I suppose ?' His voice never wavered or showed the least emotion.

'It's as settled as settled can be. He made a lot of money at the gold-diggings, and is gone out to make more.'

'Oh, ay ! I was only asking ; and talking of money, how much do I owe you ? I'm off to Clonmore this evening.'

'So soon ! I didn't know you thought of going so soon ?'

'I remembered something that I must look after. So, if it is pleasing to you, let me know. I'll start in an hour. Give me a cup of milk.'

CHAPTER XIV.

THE COTTAGE FIRE.

When Christopher Cahill left Casey's he made straight for the Clonmore road, and began walking rapidly towards the town. The terrible blow which had reached him in

Mrs. Casey's words had partly stunned him, and his mind was a dull, dark void. But in time this condition gradually altered, and aided by his rapid strides his head began to cool.

'John Lane,' he thought as he walked along. 'John Lane! John Lane. Mary Martin. Mary Martin and John Lane!—and I, what about me? Am I nothing? Am I nobody? John Lane—that—boy—is to have this girl, and I—who am a man—must go without her! Damn it!'

He stopped, faced about and shook his fist at Killard.

'John Lane, what right have you to this girl? and why did you settle everything with her and then go away, and leave her here to make other men mad—to make me mad? You can have no right or title to her until the words are said over you two, and no words have been said yet. If you had any right to her, why did you leave her here? Why didn't you take her with you? Do you think I'd leave that girl—that Mary—here if I could lay any claim or title to her? No, not I! Armies could not take her from me, wherever I went! You are no man to get the girl's word and then leave her! and by the Powers that made me I'll take no more notice of what's between you than if you never were turned adrift from the Bishop's!'

This resolution seemed to give him strength and confidence, and he looked around defiantly as though he wished to see if there was anyone prepared to challenge his resolution. But there was nothing to combat but the miles of level downs and the damp winter wind.

'What curse for me is there in the blood of those Lanes, that they should so trouble me? At first, all my life until now, I never could get my mind clear of them and their dark doings, and their gold, and their Island, and

their queer ways. I would have done or dared anything to find out about them; they were the black angels of my life, and I nearly lost my life itself trying to get behind David Lane's doings. Then a white angel comes my way! I make up my mind to let the Lanes be; to leave them to their wickedness and darkness. I make up my mind to be good for this girl's sake, and no sooner have I made up my mind, and when all my soul is on that girl, than I find a Lane at her side, saying, "Stand back, Cahill of Clonmore, she is mine!"—one of the Lanes bars my path and says, "Go back." I won't! I won't! I won't, John Lane, though all the powers of Darkness were at your heels.'

This frame of mind lasted until he reached Clonmore at night. But when he had gone to bed and lay conjuring with the past, a shadow of fear visited him, and he fell into a despair.

'I never could make out,' he mused, 'never, why it was that if David Lane has dealings with Darkness, I got away safe in life and limb that morning. They all say, even Edward Martin, and he's a fair man, that it would be bad for me to cross the path of David, even now. If he had found me on the ledge that morning he'd have killed me with as little mercy as he would a conger-eel. But how was it Darkness did not help him then or since? Why was it that neither accident nor sickness followed me, or fell upon me since?'

He paused a long time, and at last exclaimed aloud, with an oath:

'I have it! I see it now! The vengeance for that night's work is in the understanding between John Lane and Mary Martin. A blinding withering curse on the whole race of the Bishop's!'

Next morning this feeling of despair had disappeared, and his mind returned to its first determination of conquering fate, though one of the Lanes was her representative. But he resolved to take time. He determined not to precipitate matters. If he were to have any chance, a little longer interval between his approaching the subject—which absorbed all his faculties—and the departure of John Lane, was more than desirable, it was essential. So he remained at Clonmore pondering over this girl, until the thought of her was the only occupation of his mind, and the idea that he could not get her became an ever-present pain. The old inability to imagine her face or figure or voice, still tortured him. He could recollect the feeling of delight her presence gave him, but now that he was separated from her he could not recall a single feature. Of course he knew her hair was golden, and her forehead and neck white, and her eyes blue; but there was no image of her in his mind. It was as though someone had told him a desert was a vast tract of sand, and that was all he knew of it; he could not fancy the sun in the cloudless heavens, or the clouds of dust, or the whirling pillars, or the weary camels, or the dry bones of men or beasts, or the fresh cool oases. He could see no more than an enlargement of the cool level beach of Killard. He could walk about Clonmore and see golden hair, and white foreheads, and white necks, and blue eyes, but these were all an empty pageantry of features, having no meaning for him, possessing no claim upon his interest, making no difference to his heart. They did not beautify all things surrounding; they did not quicken his life; they did not make him think of prayer. Oh, it was intolerable to love so much and be thus parted!

So at last, when it was January, he could endure this no longer, and he resolved to go over to Killard and look upon this wonder of his heart once more.

He set off in the afternoon and did not arrive until dark. A gale was blowing over the land from the west. He had been walking against it all the way, and it had retarded his progress a good deal. He had calculated on reaching Killard at about four, but it was almost six by the time he got there. He wondered whether he should go to Martin's that evening. Among the fishermen six was late for calling, and often in winter they retired at seven. In the end he made up his mind to go.

'If I see no light,' he thought, 'I needn't rap.'

There was a light, and he went in. He found Edward Martin and his daughter just finishing supper, was invited to join, and sat down, after casting one long slow weary glance at the fresh young face.

'But where's the woman of the house?' Cahill asked, looking round the room.

'Mike Tobin's wife died last week,' answered Martin, 'and one of his children took the sickness and is not expected to see the morning, and she's sitting up with the child.'

'It's like her strong heart. It's like her all over.'

'Ay, my wife is as good—as good a woman as there's in Clare.'

'And in that respect her daughter takes after her.'

'Well, Mary isn't the worst. No, not the worst.'

'And it's a lucky man will get your daughter, Edward Martin.' He spoke very slowly and attempted to introduce a tone of badinage into his voice, but towards the close the voice became quite serious and shaken.

To this remark the father made no reply. Mary

coloured slightly and looked down. On the last occasion she and Christopher Cahill had met, a glimmer of what was in his mind had reached her, and she had run away in order that he might get no further, but ask one of the villagers and be spared more thought or care on her account. John had told her very often that she was lovely, and indeed she could see it with her own eyes, in the little looking-glass hanging against the white-washed wall of her bedroom. (The room which had been John's long ago was now hers, and he, while in Killard, had slept in the loft.) No doubt Christie Cahill thought her pretty too, and no doubt he was about to say something soft that day on the beach; but now he knew all about John and her, and thought no more of what had been in his mind. She had been a little girl when he went away, but then she had thought of him as the man who had brought Mr. Heywood to Killard and to her, and so enabled her to get nearer to John, by learning some of the things he knew. Now ought she to show Christopher Cahill every kindness she could, for had not the old philosopher not only bequeathed her some of his knowledge, but all his property as well? He knew about what was between John and her, and could no longer think of anything but friendship, so she would be glad to see him often, and always show him she was not ungrateful. Of course, when Mary Martin thought thus, she had not the least suspicion of the motive which had induced Cahill to bring the old man to Killard.

What talk there was this evening arose between the two men; Mary seldom joined in, and then contributed only a word or two.

Meanwhile the gale increased, and blew and battered at the houses, and flung the long sea-waves in roaring

torrents up the cliff. There were few clouds in the sky, and a full moon now and then dashed downward through breaks in the flying clouds, pale cascades of moonlight that swept over the bewildered sea, and smote the gaunt care-worn cliffs, and fled across the shivering grass of the downs, to be lost where the downs' rounded edges lay against the ragged sky.

'The gale is still rising,' said Edward Martin, 'I think it will be worse before day. I'll have a look. I hope this is no lee-shore to anything that floats to-night.' He opened the door and went out.

Cahill and the girl were left sitting in opposite corners of the great chimney-place, and a dull red peat-fire smouldered between them. He was smoking placidly, his eyes fixed on her swift fingers as they moved in and out of some work she was doing by the light of a candle, placed on the table close to the entrance of the chimney-place and at the side near her.

Oh, but this was fine for him! To sit there watching her, and never have to speak to her father. To sit and watch those fingers move; to look now at her bent head, now at her round arms bare to the elbow—what more could earth do for man? To sit and see for ever!

Edward Martin came back hastily, and with head erect, and breathing nostrils, and flashing eyes.

Mary looked at him, rose in alarm and went to him. 'What is the matter, father? What is the matter? There's no ship on the coast.'

'No, girl! there's no ship on the coast that I can see.' His face was flushed, his brows knit and the veins in his powerful neck stood out like dark cords.

'But what is the matter, Edward Martin?' asked Cahill from his place by the fire.

'Do not ask me! Do not ask me! But promise me one thing, Christie Cahill; promise me one thing, as you are a man.'

'As I am a man I am beholden to you, and I promise.' Cahill stood up and looked at the other in astonishment. What could have made Edward Martin angry? They said at Killard no one had ever seen him out of temper, and here he was standing like a bated lion at bay.

Martin put his powerful hand on Cahill's shoulder, looked in the face of the other and said, 'What I ask you to do is this: go back to your seat there by the fire, sit down, and don't get off it until I come back. Don't stir off it, or attempt to move, or leave this place till I get back. I'm going out and may be away an hour or two. Do you promise me to do this?' He put the whole pressure of his muscular arms on Cahill's shoulder until the other winced.

'I promise; but why——?'

'Ask me no questions, man, but do what I say, or it may be worse for you. Be quick.'

With a look of amazement Cahill resumed his former position in the chimney-place.

Then Edward Martin turned to his daughter and said, 'Go back to your place too, Mary, and stay there until I come back.'

Without a word the girl did as she had been commanded. It was indeed new to see her father so excited, so angered. What could have done it?

The two sat staring at the fisherman as he moved towards the back of the room, and clambered up into the loft. His actions were rapid and decided. When he had reached the loft he groped about a while and in a

moment threw a four-fanged grappling-iron to the floor with a loud clatter. Although the two in the chimney-corner saw the iron in his hand, they started at the clatter it made on the ground. Again he groped about and then flung down a coil of inch rope, after which he descended nimbly, considering his great size. When he once more stood on the earthen floor of the cottage, he swiftly uncoiled the rope and rove it through the ring of the grappling iron until half was through, then he made a loop of the double close to the ring and threw this over the ring, drawing it swiftly tight. Thus nothing short of a miracle or human hands could free that line from that ring; moreover, part of any strain entrusted to that rope would be borne by the shank of the iron itself, not all by the ring. When he had finished this he swiftly coiled up the rope, took the grappling and the rope in his left hand, held up his right hand to the two silent spectators in the chimney-corners, and said 'Remember what you are to do.' After that he went quickly to the door, opened it and disappeared.

For several seconds the man and the girl in the chimney-place sat regarding each other in blank astonishment. Cahill's attention had been diverted from the girl by the extraordinary events of the last few minutes. He was the first to speak.

'What on earth can be the matter, Mary?'

'I don't know, I'm sure. I never saw father like that before. It must be something dreadful, and it isn't a ship on shore or coming ashore: he said it wasn't.'

'It's all a great wonder to me. Why on earth did he tell us to sit still?'

'I can't think, but he must have some good reason. He always has a good reason for everything he does.'

'I'm sure he has—I'm sure he has. Might it be anything about that sick child your mother is watching?'

'No, I think not. He hadn't time to be there while he was out. And then, what could he want of the grappling and line?'

'It passes me to tell. And why did he say I was not to go until he came back?'

'There's no knowing. I can't guess.'

A long silence followed, during which the girl sat with her hands clasped idly in her lap, and her eyes fixed on the fire. Cahill's pipe had gone out, but he still retained it between his teeth. His dull, absent eyes were fixed on the idle hands of Mary.

The storm still roared around the cottage and battered at the windows, and now and then a shaft of wind sprang down the chimney, and sent the glittering atoms of peat flying hither and thither in a golden shower.

'I wish my mother was at home,' said the girl, in a tremulous voice.

He started slightly, and looked in her face. It was pale, the eyes were large, and full of tears.

'You're not frightened, Mary?' he asked very tenderly.

'No—no, not much. But it's very strange, and so bad a night, and father looked so angry. I never saw such a look on his face before.'

'Oh! it's nothing—it's nothing. And you may be sure no harm is coming. And, Mary, I'll stay and keep you company, if—if it was till morning. Don't be afraid. And maybe you have a little song you could sing that would pass away the time and lighten your heart.'

The fear of the girl had brought his mind back to her, and he was now looking into her face in the old wondering way, only that there was a terrible tenderness added.

He would have given all he had seen of the world to sit and sustain that shrinking form. Was ever woman so radiant and so pure? There was about this maid something that appeared to cool, and chasten, and illumine where she came. Something so fascinating in her fear that he seemed drawn to her by a magnetic force, and yet kept back by the knowledge that she was not to be thought of, save as a high-born stranger-lady, who must be spoken to as though she were a queen. The spectacle of her distress drove the selfishness out of this dull, slow-thinking man. There was now no passion in him, but the passion of pity. Whatever he might have been to all the world else, he was a respectful worshipper of hers.

To his suggestion about the song, she answered, with a manner of increased distress:

'Oh! no. I could not sing now. Besides,' she added, with a faint smile, 'it would be a loud song indeed could be heard in the noise of this wind and sea.'

Like a distant cannonade came the volume of sound rushing shoreward from the bursting ocean.

For a long time the two remained mute. Her mind was stupefied by the conduct of her father, and Cahill was wondering if, under present circumstances, he had better speak to her or hold his peace. Only half-an-hour had elapsed since Edward Martin left the cottage; he would be away an hour or two; so Cahill resolved to make no attempt at introducing the subject he had been leading up to on the beach. Perhaps, taking everything into account, it might be best to let the matter alone for the present. He wished he had a glib tongue to divert the girl's thoughts from her fears. But he'd do his best.

So he set himself with all his might to interest her in

topics of general interest, or concerning the village, the fishing, Clonmore, and the old philosopher who had died.

Thus an hour passed. Martin had not yet returned. It was, according to the notions of Killard, growing late. Now and then Mary came back to the source of her uneasiness; but during the most of the time he succeeded in diverting her mind from it, and it seemed as though her father was out fishing. Yet in the lapses of the talk, when the storm intruded forcibly on her mind, she shuddered and turned pale.

What a haven of pure delight that chimney-place was for him on this tempestuous night. There could be no place on all the earth like this warm nook; no companionship like this sweet presence. The man was utterly subjugated and changed. His attitude to fate had become one of terrible regret that he was no better man; piteous appeal that some merciful miracle might be wrought in his favour. Oh, it was so good to be here, sitting in the presence of goodness embodied in so fair a form!

The second hour went by, and still they were alone. Perhaps, he thought, another such opportunity might never occur. She was becoming seriously alarmed, and, all at once, an irresistible yearning fell upon him, and his heart could no longer be restrained.

'Mary,' he said, in a tone of great tenderness, 'don't be frightened, he'll be in soon; and no matter how long it is, I'll sit here and keep you company. Ah, Mary, you don't know what it is to me to sit here now. Only I can see your trouble about your father, and it goes to my heart, I'd wish to sit here until I died.'

The expression of her face altered, and a new and more immediate fear seemed to strike into her.

'You must not say things like that to me now, nor at any other time. You know I must not listen, and you know I cannot go away.'

'Mary, I wouldn't say anything to fret you for all the gold and silver in Clonmore. I'd put my body and soul between you and hurt or harm. It's very hard on me. Why!—why am I to feel as I do feel, and find I am too late?'

There was a depth of desolation in the man's voice that shocked the girl, and she looked at him with her blue eyes full of compassion.

'There's many a better and prettier girl would be only too proud to hear you speak to her, Christie Cahill.'

'Listen to me, Mary Martin, and tell me, and I'll stop, if I say anything unbecoming to your ears. I'm no boy, I've seen many people and places, and I never saw, never took a day's notice of any girl until I came to Killard that day. Ever since that day, I'm bad—bad—bad as bad can be, and I'll never be well again.'

He folded his arms across his chest, his eyes were full of tears, his words came in a deep voice, ragged here and there.

'I'm very sorry—very sorry indeed, Christie Cahill, for you. But there is no good in saying such things to me, and I don't think you ought——'

'If I have offended you, Mary, say the word, and I'll break my promise and go,' he said, with wildness in his eyes, throwing out his arms towards her.

'Stay where you are, but talk of something else. You know it's not right of you to speak to me of such a thing.'

She was now frightened on account of him. His manner was reckless and desperate.

'Say the word,' he cried, still more wildly, 'and I'll go over the cliff, and trouble you no more. My life is not worth keeping.'

'Oh! what am I to do?—What am I to do? You frighten me beyond the storm. Why do you say such dreadful things? I'm only a poor weak girl, and you frighten me out of my wits.'

She covered her face, and bent her head.

'I'm tired of my life! My life is only a curse to me. I can't think of anything but the one thing. Over the cliffs I'll go, if you say the word——'

He drew his arms tightly across his chest.

'For God's sake, Christie Cahill, have mercy on me, and stop! Think of the time—think of where you are—think of the man over the sea that I belong to—think of me; and why do you terrify me like this in my father's house when he is away, and I don't know what may have come to him?'

She held her hands out to him, and implored him with tear-filled eyes and a white scared face.

But the man's agony was upon him, and could not be stayed. He unlocked his arms and wound them about his head.

'I'll do anything you ask me. I'll be good for you. I'll give all I have to the poor. I'll die for you. I'll do anything you ask, except go on as I'm going, without a hope.'

'Oh, my God! what shall I do?'

With a cry, both leaped to their feet. A violent gust of wind had entered the cottage; the turf sparks flew about, and the tins rattled violently against the wall. In the doorway stood Edward Martin, pale and careworn, with blood upon his hands.

CHAPTER XV.

THE ISLAND FIRE.

WHEN Edward Martin left his cottage on that night, with the grappling-iron and the line, he turned towards the downs and struck out swiftly south. Overhead the clouds tore through the sky. Great towers of pale moonlight stalked, at a furious pace, across the confounded waters; beneath him bellowed the billows on the coast; and by him swept a sea-mist, now dark and grey, now a silver fleece.

The man wore a blue woollen smock, blue flannel trousers, and a sou'-wester. Yet, notwithstanding this tight-fitting garb and his great strength of body and limb, the fierce wind now and then forced him from his straight course, and he was compelled to walk, leaning at a considerable angle against the gale.

As soon as he had got outside the door he shifted the grappling-iron and line to his right hand, and their weight helped to balance him, and give security to his feet.

'What a night for murder!' he muttered, 'and what a heart to plan it!'

On he went at the top of his speed, now walking with swift long strides, now running awhile, with his right shoulder thrust into the wind.

Without staying his feet, every now and then he looked down into the wind, and tried to pierce the sea-mist and the flying shadows of the clouds; the remainder of the time his glance was rigidly fixed ahead.

'What a night to think of murder!' he repeated frequently, 'what a night!'

After one of those ejaculations he would bend his head forward, run a few hundred yards, and then fall into a walk again at the thought, 'I must keep myself fresh.'

But after walking a few minutes the former thought presented itself:

'What a night to think of murder! what a night!' and again he ran swiftly southward, leaning towards the gale.

'It's well there's a moon,' he thought; and although the wind may be bad for those at sea, it will be useful to me. It will steady me, and I shall want all my wits and strength, and all other help that may be given to me. I often feared something of this kind, but never was sure until to-night. What a night to think of murder! What a night!'

Again he ran swiftly forward with his body well slanted into the storm, and the loose end of the line beating incessantly against his legs.

'Keep it up,' he cried to himself, 'keep it up. You can't be too early, and already you may be too late.'

Again his eyes passed over the expanse of tumultuous water.

'All right yet! So far as I can see, nothing in sight! but there's a shallow offing, a night like this; and speed cannot be wasted. Keep it up, Edward Martin. Keep it up.'

At length he stopped, threw down the grappling and the rope, and stood to recover breath.

'Still, all is well,' he muttered. 'Still all is well. Nothing in view.'

The gale had rather increased than diminished. The long ocean swells, battered out of regular column by the

wind, dashed at the cliffs in huge cones, and with a dull sullen roar, which seemed the prelude to some wilder tumult destined to overwhelm the land. Seen from the elevation of the cliff the height of the waves was dwarfed; and the plain of the ocean, revealed by the moon, looked a perplexed and tangled conflict of moving ridges, domes and hollows, with now and then light silver lace-wafts of spume, and white crests, and long dreary trains of foam reaching in huge scarfs away over billow and billow, until lost to the eye in the shadow of a rushing scud.

Edward Martin stood on the very edge of the cliff; beneath him lay a blind abyss from which rose a muffled sound and salt spray, and beyond this abyss stood the rocky column of cliff, the Bishop's Island.

As soon as the fisherman had fully recovered, he stooped down, felt about with his hands, and soon found the iron hook to which the deaf mute was wont to attach the rope bridge. Martin unwound his coil of rope, standing on it as he did so to prevent its blowing about in the wind.

When it was all undone he seized the grappling-iron in one hand, and having secured the rope to the hook, stood upright with his broad powerful chest facing the driving wind. Stepping back a few paces he ran towards the edge of the precipice, raised his arm aloft, threw back his right shoulder, and then, flinging all his weight forward, hurled the grappling across the abyss.

At that time he was in darkness. He stooped down and felt the double line. Good! The line had not tightened, the grappling had reached the opposite side.

His hope had been to cast the grappling into the hollow that sloped towards the house, where the declivity, if the iron went fair, would afford the securest hold. Had

he done so? Even when the moonlight flashed by, it was impossible to see through the sea-mist and the disturbing effect of the wind on the eyes and eye-lashes.

He drew in the line until no more would come easily, then pulled gently at first, gradually increased the draught until he had applied his full force. So far all was right. The grappling had yielded a little at first and finally remained steadfast, immovable. This was the kind of hold he liked best, for it indicated that the claws of the iron had met soil, penetrated it, come some way through it, and finally encountered substantial rock or stone. The soil would prevent the grappling from jumping, and the rock would keep it from coming home.

As soon as Martin was satisfied the grappling was securely placed, he disengaged the rope from the hook, drew one of the lines as tightly as ever he could, and then made it fast. The other line he also tied to the hook, but allowed it to dip a foot or two below the former. Then he looked round once more.

All was right still. As far as he could see, no ship swam on that awful lee-shore. He shook himself together, muttered a brief prayer, knelt down, got astride the slacker rope, and seizing the other in his hands moved himself slowly and cautiously westward, until he hung over the chasm, and lay swinging violently in air amid the blinding sea-mist.

At first the vibration of the rope proved so great that he had to content himself with holding on, but after a little time the swaying grew less erratic, and he began his hazardous passage. The distance was short, and he was an exceedingly powerful man, accustomed to face danger as a matter of course. But the night was very rough, and he could not be quite sure the iron would hold securely.

Yet, he argued, if the grappling gave, the hook would not, and the worst that could happen would be a bad blow against the side of the mainland cliff; that blow might kill or disable him, so that he could not hold on; but he hoped not, and kept his feet towards the mainland, and his hands as near the Island as possible, so that if he dropped, his legs might be of service to lessen the shock.

Slowly and cautiously he worked himself along the ropes, pushing his hands first, and then moving his body from point to point with slow and cautious power.

Below him the clamour of the waters sounded in the misty gloom. Above, the white moon shone through the torn tangles of the clouds. Around him beat the torrents of the gale.

Urging himself forward with the goad, 'Speed cannot be wasted; keep it up,' he reached the opposite cliff, and crawling in on the Island, stood up and faced the storm.

He shaded his eyes and looked quickly into the wind.

'All is well so far. All is well, so far as I can see,' he thought, 'but time is everything.'

Thrusting his head and chest forward against the gale, he strode across the Island, gained the hollow, stood at the head of the precipitous path and looked down.

One of the flying shadows at that moment pressed against the seaward face of the Island, and made it a black void to the wind. Far down, close to the sea, and now and then half obscured by mists rising from the spray, glowed and writhed a large red and yellow patch of fire, and in the yellow core of light around the fire stood the figure of a man with one hand against the cliff, and the other feeding the flame.

For a minute Martin immovably regarded the ledge. Then setting his teeth he muttered:

'Murder! Murder! Murder. Who else could plan and try to do murder to the poor souls at sea, and on such a night of grief as this! To think of a ship seeing that light, believing it honest, and steering by it to destruction, and this man doing such an accursed act!'

He waited until the moonlight was once more flung like a white winding-sheet against the cliff, then turning his back to the sea he began descending the steep rugged path towards the ledge.

Never had he been on that Island before; but, aided by the moonlight, assisted by his great strength, fortified by familiarity with danger and by a good design, the descent, though slow, was steady and sure.

He was careful not to move except when the rocks around him were illumined by the moon.

'How providential it is,' he thought, 'that there is light. I could never get down in the dark.'

Even the very gale favoured his descent, for it forced his body against the cliff, and diminished his chance of falling.

When he reached the rope he paused to recover breath, and see what was going on below, and if the man had discovered his presence.

Evidently Lane had not yet perceived Martin. The deaf mute was still intent on feeding the fire.

It puzzled me,' thought Martin, 'how any open fire could live in that gale. Why, 'twould blow turf or wood like chaff. But he's got a kind of wall round the fire and that keeps it right. Oh! to think of a wrecker's fire on such a night! No man but one having to do with Evil would dare so terrible a crime.'

He looked out to sea. Still no vessel in view. What a mercy!

Now for it !

He resumed his way and did not pause again until within a few feet of the ledge. Then he turned and glanced down.

The moon was hidden; all was dark save where the fire glowed and hissed, and far off dreary spaces of white tumult where the moonlight careered over the southern sea.

Lane had never raised his head. He was too much occupied with his fire. All his soul was centred in that red core and flying flame. He moved it about with an iron rod, and found wood for it in a crevice of the cliff. His eyes never once withdrew, even to look for the wood. Neither did they turn towards the ocean.

Suddenly he sprang into an erect posture. Something had fallen on the ledge. He saw it shoot by the fire at the other side of the flame, and Edward Martin confronted him with a face of furious anger.

Edward Martin ! His son's adopted father, there, by night, and while he was at such work ! All must have been discovered !

For a moment the two men stood face to face.

Was his son coming now with a band of police or marauders? This man had reached the Island by no ordinary means. No ordinary means existed. Of late, ever since the expulsion of his child, he had adopted an additional precaution to prevent anyone reaching the Island from the mainland. It was now only when away from the Island himself that any connection whatever existed between the two cliffs; he always raised the iron bar to which the end of his bridge was attached, out of the fissure, and brought it back with him when he returned to the Island. Therefore this man who had

adopted his only child had reached the Island at the instigation of the son, and by mysterious means, procured through that faculty of receiving messages through the ears, and discovery was at hand—with his only son, his own flesh and blood, as the instrument.

David Lane stood unnerved and aghast.

The anger of Edward Martin almost overwhelmed himself, and in the first burst of standing face to face with this man, feeding a fire on such a coast in the midst of such a storm, he raised his arms as if to seize the deaf mute and hurl him over into the ocean.

All at once his arms fell, and bending forward he stooped, caught the hot walls of the fire in his hands—already torn and bleeding from the sharp rocks of the path—and flung the glowing stones over the ledge.

The wind hurled the brands hither and thither; some shot up the cliffs and lay, fierce eyes of fire against the inky walls, others whirled round and round and finally fell down over the verge.

With his heavy hob-nailed boots Martin kicked the sparkling embers until, where a moment ago there had been a fierce white flare, now a darkness lay seeming deeper than that around by contrast with its former light.

When the last bright spark had disappeared from the ledge, the fisherman—having waited until the moonlight came—took David Lane by the shoulders and, shaking him violently, pointed to the sea and to the cliffs, and made signs of distress.

At first the mute did not comprehend. Martin repeated his pantomime, and elaborated it. In the end Lane detected the other's meaning, hesitated awhile, made a gesture of denial, and then fell on his knees as though supplicating for mercy, at the same time sweeping

with his hands the place where the fire had been, and holding out his arms and letting them fall in token that he would never so offend again. But when his face was bent towards the ground a smile passed over it.

His son's adopted father had come to the Island, no doubt, by mysterious agency, but he thought this had been a fire to bring ships ashore. This intruder had no knowledge of what the real object had been. Nothing could be better than this, and he'd affect sorrow for having intended what never crossed his mind, in order that Lane might have no suspicion of the truth.

Martin wondered what further he should do. His object so far had been accomplished, but it would not answer to have such a villain on the coast. He might repeat this awful crime the very next gale. What could be done to rid the place of such a monster? It was not likely he'd make another fire to-night; the stones had all been cast over and could not be replaced easily.

He'd go back now and inform the police of Clonmore to-morrow that there was a wrecker on the Bishop's Island. A wrecker! Yes, that was the secret of David Lane's gold, and might account for the expulsion of the son.

Again he awaited moonlight and then made signs to the deaf man that he, Lane, was not to stir from his place until he, Martin, had gained the summit of the Island. To this Lane eagerly consented, and the fisherman climbed laboriously up and—after much toil and frequent waits—gained the summit, whence he returned to the mainland as he had come, and struck out for home, leaving the grappling-iron and rope behind him.

'I'll get them to-morrow,' he thought. 'If, after I left home, Cahill had gone out of the house or even pulled

back the curtain of the southern window, he might have seen the light on the spray and followed me; and if he once more went to that Island, Lane would kill him on the spot, or seek him afterwards and do him harm. I did not want company or questions until I saw how matters were. I hope Cahill kept his promise—I hope he kept his promise.'

The moment after he had entered his cottage the two occupants recognised him. So much startled were they that for a time all thought of the conversation in which they had been engaged fled from their minds. Mary was terrified at the appearance of her father; Cahill was lost in astonishment. For the last few minutes he had completely forgotten the strange manner and departure of the fisherman; he had been completely absorbed in his own hopeless-seeming love for this girl. In this girl's breast there waged a conflict between relief from Cahill's pleading and alarm at her father's appearance.

Both Cahill and the girl asked Martin where he had been, but he would not tell, and he was not the man to be asked twice. He got warm water and washed his hands, and then sat down by the fire and leaned wearily against the wall. Opposite him was Cahill, and in the corner inside himself his daughter.

'I kept you too long, Christie Cahill; but I could not help it. I'm very tired, and will go to bed; you can't do better than do the same.'

But the bailiff's son did not seem disposed to stir.

The fisherman put on a dry coat, and having taken off his boots placed them near the fire to dry, with the soles facing the turf. Then he sat down again.

Cahill stretched over and, taking up one of the boots, turned the hobnailed sole towards the light. All three

uttered exclamations of surprise, for wedged in between the nails were several small sparkling fragments of yellow metal.

For a time the three sat regarding Cahill's discovery.

'It's gold!' cried Cahill at length. 'It's gold!' Then suddenly he looked up into Martin's face with an expression of certainty, saying, 'You've been to the Bishop's Island, Edward Martin.'

A look of profound perplexity was on the fisherman's face. A doubt seemed to spring up in his mind. Perhaps after all he had wronged Lane, and it had been no wrecker's fire.

'I have,' he answered. And then he told them all.

'It was no wrecker's fire,' said Cahill, in a tone of fascination and conviction, 'but Lane making gold with the help of Darkness; and there's some of the gold on your boot. What good would a wreck be to him? There's no beach but at Killard, and all the village could see a ship or things stranded there. Nothing could come ashore at the Island; there's no place for it to land.'

'That is true,' returned Martin, in still deeper perplexity. 'I did not think of that. Whatever he may have been doing with the fire it wasn't a false beacon, and I'd have no right to say it was, or to say anything about it to the police of Clonmore, as I thought of.'

'It was David Lane making gold with the help of Darkness.'

'I don't believe that. But he may have found a mine on the Island.'

'But golden guineas don't grow in gold mines, do they, Edward Martin? Answer me that.'

'No; John Lane told us gold is got in dust and lumps.'

John Lane! John Lane! Cahill's interest suddenly wandered. He looked at the golden head and white neck of Mary, and with something between a groan and an execration he rose, bade good-night and left.

CHAPTER XVI.

DAVID LANE'S WILL.

For the second time uninvited feet had touched the Bishop's Island, and David Lane was sorely perplexed to find that all his precautions could be set at nought by a line, a grappling-iron, a resolute will, steady eye, and strong arms. He was now somewhat shaken in his belief that his son had anything to do with either of these visits. He had learned from the Fool that his son was a long way from home, and not expected back for a considerable time. No doubt Edward Martin had seen his fire, and thought it had been kindled with a view to luring ships to destruction. He knew that often, when sudden storms came on by night and the Killard boats were at sea, the people made fires near the opening of the reef extending across the bay, to show the fishermen where they should run for. He had more than once lighted such fires as that of to-night, but never except in bad weather, when he could be sure none of the boats lay off the land so as to be able to see the fires, and when the chance of people being on the downs was infinitely small. He had not desired that man, either afloat or ashore, should see his fires. In fact, he would have been filled with apprehension if certain he had been observed. Now he had been observed, and by the man most

trusted and respected in Killard. But this tall man attributed the fire to wrong motives, and he had wilfully encouraged the error. What would come of that discovery he did not pause to consider. The chief thing had been gained: this tall man possessed no clue to the real purpose of the fire.

If his son knew of the gold, it was plain, so far, this tall man was not curious, although on the Island, and—supposing he knew all from his son—within easy reach of certifying the communications of the boy. Yet, instead of making search or displaying curiosity, he had crossed from the mainland, been on the table of the Island twice, and still made no attempt to corroborate such a communication, for there appeared no trace of search. This tall man had seen what he believed to be a wrecker's fire; had, at great risk, come and extinguished it, and gone away without showing any further interest in his Island. It was quite plain to him now that this tall man knew nothing about the gold; and yet there was no one whom his son would be more likely to inform of it than this very man.

He had never been able to learn that Cahill had an interview with his boy before that morning, years ago, when he discovered Cahill on the ledge. He had no means of knowing that Cahill had ever been on the table of the Island. If he had, he did not make a traceable effort to discover anything, and nothing had since come of that visit.

All this reasoning took David Lane many months. He performed only a little of it at a time; he always began at the beginning, and often made no advance on the former stage. But, bit by bit, he got to the serious question; the question beyond which there seemed no

possible advance : How was he, after all, to be sure the boy knew, and if he did know, why had he remained so great a time inactive, in the face of what his own father had given him to understand about an unavoidable obligation on such a són to betray and ruin him? Tom the Fool had informed him how his son had, upon his return, related his gold-getting out of the earth, and that those who found it so were at perfect liberty to keep it and make use of it as they chose. The gold so found —he had questioned Tom closely and made certain— in circular flat forms like that at Clonmore, but in irregular pieces, like gravel, and some of it was as fine as sand. Such gold—gold in irregular pieces like gravel, or fine, like sand—anyone might keep who found it; his son dug up such gold and kept it. So he had often, since he heard this, made fires on the Island, but he durst not do so any more. That was of little consequence now; there was hardly any more work of the kind needed. His father before him must have known something like what Tom had told him about the finding and keeping of gold.

His son had long lived with Martin, and never once personally sought to revisit the Island since that morning of the expulsion. If there had been an obligation laid by fate on the boy, why had he not redeemed it before now?

This additional reasoning was also the result of months; and then, one morning in the early spring, it suddenly rushed into the dull, obscure mind of this solitary, forlorn outcast, that perhaps, after all, no such obligation did lie on his son; and that only he had flung the boy from him, he might now have the young man at his side.

The dawn of such a thought had never come upon

him before, and now he sat utterly confounded. He went over the thought a thousand times, but could not get further. It had built a black wall across the course of his speculations, and he could see no further; he seemed to feel that beyond it stood the loving boy he had cast away, grown into the careless man, who would not return, even entreated on his knees. Could it be he had thrown away from him, alienated for ever, in a delusion, the only being he loved on earth?

He reverted to the past. He saw the young child in its mother's arms; in imagination he took it from her, and fondled it, and pressed it to his breast, and kissed it, and felt it wind its little arms round him, and then smiled to find it recoil from his beard. Later, the boy was able to go about the Island—his wife being gone away for ever, across the dim gulf between the Island and the mainland, into the dimmer one of the grave. He saw the boy gambol and leap in the sunlight, and cast his brown hair from his fair young forehead. Later still the boy had grown to be handy at the lines, and could bait a hook or tie one on a line, or fix a sinker. Even then the father felt his boy often in his arms, and lay in the bright sunlight looking at the little lad cutting curious shapes—shapes of birds and fishes—out of wood with that wonderful clasp-knife. Then came the wild doubts and wild scenes between the two, and finally the terrible episode of the gun, the rending expulsion, the heart-blankness, the isolated despair and desperate dreads.

Now he began to see that all which was direful in this retrospect might have been omitted; that there was no need to fear the boy; no reason to believe what his father had communicated as to the infallible evil coming to him,

should a child of his be able to receive messages through the ears.

Then a new aspect of the affair arose to his mind. Could it be that the evil predicted by his father had been this separation, this estrangement, this desert of the heart? Perhaps he had, by sending the boy away, only anticipated what the boy would do of his own accord, sooner or later. Perhaps, because his boy got messages through his ears, they two could never live together when the boy had grown up. Woe! woe! Woe on all sides—overhead, behind, and before.

But he might have waited until the boy went of his own accord, and now he would never return.

So this poor, dark soul, blinding about in a bereaved body, ate the flesh off his bones, and as the months went by he grew into feeble health. Tom, his old friend, was now once more with him, and grieved to see the change in the once swarthy, powerful man. Lane lost all caring for food, often went whole days without breaking his fast. He had grown quite heedless about everything, and wandered aimlessly, often neglecting to bait the hooks.

His strength had diminished, and he could no longer go up and down that cliff-path with his old alertness. In all his lonely broodings he had never felt any resentment against Martin. After the fisherman had left the Island that night, he was so pleased to think no worse had arisen, that he could not harbour resentment. Martin had not come about the gold, or because of anything communicated by his son, but because he had believed the fire to be a false beacon; Lane was then so pleased to find such was Martin's belief, that he would not cross his path. Now matters had taken another turn; instead of an unkind sentiment towards the fisherman, he began to feel a

dull, ill-defined gratitude. Had not this tall man taken and befriended his son, when he himself had flung that son from him? Somewhere in this feeling of gratitude lurked a seed of jealousy, but it never grew. This tall fisherman may have absorbed the love he had spurned, but then he (Lane) was now humble enough to take a share in his son's heart.

The spring passed into summer, and summer into winter once more, and he grew worse in health.

One wild morning, in going down the path, he slipped, slid a few paces over the rugged way, recovered his footing, and reached the bottom without further accident. But on endeavouring to ascend, he found his knee painful; however, it was not bad, and he arrived at the hut in safety. But next morning the knee was stiff and sore. It was with the greatest difficulty he could walk, and he durst not dream of going down to draw the lines. He examined the limb, and found a slight scratch and a large livid patch on the inner side of the knee-cap He had often got hurts and bruises before, but this seemed the worst; he had never, until this time, been unable to go up and down the path, and now he could not accomplish that feat if worlds depended on it.

All that day he either lay on his truckle-bed, or crawled painfully about the hut and Island. He ate little or nothing, and when night came was restless and feverish; he could not sleep, except in snatches, filled with unpleasant dreams rudely broken.

In the dream which agonized him most, he thought his son—still the boy he had been before the expulsion—came to him and begged for a little gold, and begged in vain. Upon his refusal, the boy left and went to sea, and for awhile the dream halted and he awoke.

Again he slept and took up the dream. He was on the ledge in a gale, his fire was burning fiercely, and the work going on splendidly. Something made him raise his head suddenly. Wonderful! The sea was quite smooth, although the wind dashed across it at a wild rate. Far away, near the horizon, a large ship swept towards the coast. A ship! a ship! and his fire burning like a huge yellow sun against the dark giant-cliff. A ship! A ship on that awful lee-shore, and the flames of his fire leaping and dancing like huge tangles of lightning.

Why did the thought, 'A ship!' fill him with such torture? Why was he not able to burst down the walls of his furnace and fling the fierce core into the sea? Why was he powerless there, deprived of all possibility of motion? How was it that the fire seemed to gain in intensity and volume, although no fresh fuel was added? What dead-weight of justice lay upon him like a leaden sheet? A ship! A ship on that lee-shore, and his fire leaping and dancing as it had never leaped and danced before! See! The flames shot up the sides of the cliff, filled the whole path, and bent in a blazing arch over the crest of the very Island itself! And there, in the eye of the wind, sat the ship, sliding over the placid sea like a gull on the air in a calm; and here was his fire on that ledge, and here was he powerless, the weight of a thousand feet of sand pressing him down!

With prodigious speed the ship drew near. It was now possible to distinguish the men on deck forward. On she came, right in the eye of the wind. A peculiar light hung around her, and clothed her as a sea-mist clothes a rock. Oh!

Would not the merciful cliffs fall upon him and crush him flat before he should see that sight! Would not a

charitable tongue from that flashing fire sere out his eyeballs, that he might know nothing more!

The men of the ship were holding up angry faces to him and threatening hands. They had now realized their fate and his crime.

Although the wind was wild, the sea lay calm, and if they would only forbear, he could throw a line to the boy. But those men knew the boy's father had kindled the fire, and they now held the boy—his own son, the only living thing allied to him in blood or affection—they held him suspended over the bows of the ship, so that his body might break the blow when she crashed against the cliffs.

On she came, and still he was powerless. A change arose, and he could move his body freely, with the exception of one leg. The gold running from the fire had collected in a pool about the foot of that leg, cooled, and soldered the limb securely to the rock. He stretched out his arms towards his child, and pleaded with his arms to the men.

But his boy did not see him, and the men jeered.

A tremendous shock, and great trembling of the rock! The ship had struck, bounded back, almost uninjured, from the cliff.

He looked over, and saw a piteous, blood-stained, dead face upturned!

The heat of the gold had now reached his knee, and his suffering of mind and body became excruciating. He made a desperate plunge forward to end both, and with a shrill, scared scream awoke.

The pain in his knee had increased greatly, and he slept no more that night.

Next day the Fool came, and found David Lane much

worse. His hand was hot and dry, his eyes fiery and reckless, his breathing quick and distressing.

The deaf mute had smiled when he saw Tom, beckoned him to him, stroked and patted and kissed his hand. Then Lane made signs that he wished to communicate something of the highest importance, which Tom was to reveal to no one but as Lane directed.

Tom promised by shaking both Lane's hands and his own head.

Might death seize Tom if he broke his promise!

Tom nodded, in token he wished it might.

Very good. If he, Lane, should die of this hurt, the Fool was to communicate the following to John Lane, and to no other living being, when John Lane returned.

Yes.

He (Tom) was never himself to do any of the things prescribed for the son.

Never. Might he die in the attempt if he tried.

Well. He was to show that hearth-stone there to the son, bid him lift it and take out a certain thing, a paper, at present concealed under it. The son was to look at that paper, and while he was so looking, Tom was to make the son stand exactly with his right toe on the edge of that hearthstone, just where the chip was out. Then Tom was to fetch a mackerel, and place it in the son's hand with the tail towards the door and the head towards the wall in front of him.

That was all. Tom would promise this to his old friend, who was very ill, likely to die.

Might Tom be hanged by the neck and his body burnt if he departed in the least trifle from his instructions, or betrayed a particle to anyone, a particle the size of this grain of sand.

Good. The mute embraced his faithful friend, the only man who had always been loyal and true to him—the only man on whom he could implicitly rely.

Further, the title-deed of the Island was in that box there, and Tom was to keep it until the boy's return, and then give it to the boy.

Yes. [Tom had taken the deed out of the box, and restored it by direction of his friend.]

Good. Now Tom—should he, Lane, die—was to come and live on the Island, and continue to live there until the son's return, and then go.

He would do so.

And here was money; not gold, which might bring trouble; but silver, in a bag, all for Tom himself.

No, no.

Yes; he could not live on the Island and do messages to Clonmore, and he should do messages to Clonmore, unless he had money. This money and the hand lines would support him until the son's return.

Anyway Tom didn't want the money now, and Lane was not going to die, but to get well and hearty. Leave the money under the bed for the present.

Very well. But Tom must practise making the bridge, and follow him until he showed how he regained the Island when obliged to go ashore.

The next day Lane was still worse. The cut had not healed. It looked fierce and angry, the limb much swollen, and he could not leave his bed.

Knowing he could well afford it, Tom suggested a doctor should be brought from Clonmore. But Lane got into a rage at the idea, and the rage made him worse; so Tom did not renew the subject.

The following day a good deal of the pain had left the

immediate region of the cut, but round it there was a fiery zone of heat.

The day following there was feeling of no kind in the whole limb, and in another day, David Lane, the deaf mute of the Bishop's Island, died.

Tom went into the village wailing and lamenting, and having sent a man to Clonmore to get such things as were required for the funeral of his dead friend, returned to the Island and watched by the corpse.

In due time the body was placed in a coffin, and then the coffin, having been pushed by the faithful Tom into the network of Lane's bridge, was drawn ashore by men of the village, and buried in a remote corner of the churchyard where no other people of Killard lay.

Father Murtagh had said, when spoken to, that they might do so if the village did not object; and—partly out of consideration for the adopted father of Lane's son, and partly out of consideration for the son himself, and partly because death softens all hearts—no voice was raised against allowing the remains of this poor outcast of nature and alien in faith—against letting the man who could not hear the Word in life, lie with those who had been formed with a hand of higher favour by the Almighty Maker of all.

CHAPTER XVII.

A DRIVE TO CLONMORE.

After the burial of David Lane matters went on at Killard in their ordinary course.

Tom took up his residence on the Bishop's Island, having given no further account of the last days of his

friend than that he had been commissioned to hold the place until the young man's return, and then deliver it up to the rightful heir. He had never alluded to the instructions received from the dying man respecting the hearth-stone; indeed he would freely have confronted any fate rather than break his promise.

The singular friendship between the man now dead and Tom had often formed a subject of wonder and speculation to the villagers; but Lane had been guided wisely in his choice of a friend.

Tom was one of those half-witted beings who—though possessing a mind weak in all its manifestations—laboured under but one delusion. He firmly believed that the spirit of his dead grandmother took a deliberate and an inexhaustible delight in directing the elements to afflict him. On all other matters his reason, though feeble, was not positively diseased.

He was not as sharp as the other people of Killard, but he was as intelligent, outside his hallucination, as a negro. The quality which had caused Lane to select him was the almost utter absence of curiosity in his nature.

When he wasn't eating or drinking, or sleeping, or engaged in buying for the people of Killard, or answering questions, he spoke very little and seemed content either to enjoy the sunshine or the heat of a friendly hearth, without caring to travel beyond the immediate limits of his own sensations. If he needed mental excitement he always found it in the subject of the imaginary injuries inflicted upon him by the spirit of his fears. To roast potatoes given him by one at the fire of another was sufficient occupation for him a whole evening. He took only a dull interest in the personalities of those around him. They were people with names, to be found in cer-

tain places, and some treated him more kindly and gave him more food than others; beyond this he felt little concern in them.

If commissions were entrusted to him he executed them with the minutest accuracy; if anything prevented him from carrying out to the letter his instructions, he displayed no invention, but left the thing undone.

With respect to the family of the Bishop's Island, a different feeling had existed. In some strange roundabout way, utterly inexplicable to himself, he had recognised in the Lanes beings separated from the rest of mankind, as he felt himself to be. They lived outside the limits of the mainland, and outside the affection of their neighbours.

This David Lane and he had been boys together, and they had both been afflicted; David Lane by the want of hearing and speech, he by the malignity of the she-wolf. There was no one else in Killard dumb like Lane, no one else persecuted like himself. Out of this feeling and close association had sprung an attachment of spaniel-like fidelity. In Lane he recognised a twin brother in affliction. Neither was like other men, and both were much together. He would have freely given his life for his friend's sake.

On Lane's side the case had been different. He, a bold daring man, the centre of a secret which all were curious to learn and which he was resolved to retain, living in such severe isolation, had necessity for some one person whom he could rely upon exercising no aggressive curiosity, and who should at the same time be useful to him. He had wanted the Fool for vulgar material purposes, no more.

But as time had gone on he felt towards Tom a sentiment as closely allied to friendship as could exist in his

stunted soul. All the love of his nature had been centred and lost in the boy. And once remorse for the boy's expulsion came upon him, the love came back, but not the object of it; and this love had bitten into his nature, devouring, not nourishing him.

Some time after Tom had taken up his abode on the Island, Christopher Cahill came early one morning, and as soon as Tom was stirring, called to him, got him to stand on the edge of the precipice and speak. But for all practical purposes he might have saved his breath.

Tom did not seem to care in the least for the society of the other, and nothing could induce him to divulge the simplest fact in connection with the place.

Cahill asked some questions about how and when he might see Tom in Killard or Clonmore, but in matters regarding his trust Tom was exceedingly acute, and he answered that whenever he went to either place he did not give the front-door or back-door key of the Island to anyone; but that there were too good-sized bull-dogs always there when he was away, and that they were very fond of the calves and throats of stray callers.

As a matter of precaution Tom had added two ferocious bull-dogs to his establishment almost immediately after Lane's death.

Cahill retired, discomfited and dispirited.

Ever since the evening when Edward Martin had visited the Island and he had sat in the chimney corner pleading to Mary, he had never been inside the door of Martin's house. He did not think Mary had told of his prayers; but he felt quite certain he had gone too far to renew visits without danger of disclosure, and Edward Martin was the last man in all Killard to allow anything like interference with John's sweetheart, while John him-

self was away. The girl had given her word, the fisherman and his wife had consented, and Cahill believed that no man of Martin's straightforward character would allow anything now to intervene between the two except their joint wills.

But he had often come to the village and hung about, and now and then had exchanged a few words with Mary in the same strange pleading tone employed that night in the chimney-place; but the words themselves were always common-place, having no reference whatever to the subject nearest his heart.

The girl's eyes were now fully opened to the extent of his sufferings, but what could she do for him? If she was civil and tarried when they met, it only made matters worse; it was so hard to see his eyes begging for a little more of her presence, to hear the deep pathos shaking his voice, and yet deny him so small a favour as a few words of civil commonplace. It would be unkind to be rude to him; to him who had never done her the least harm; to him who had brought Mr. Heywood to Killard and introduced her to the old man; to him whom she, through no fault of her own, had caused so much pain and disappointment.

So she always made him kindly answers, and showed, by her eyes, that she pitied him; thus the trouble in his heart grew worse and worse, and his life became a round of vacant days, and his night seasons of unavailing sorrow.

Cahill's attempt to get some news out of Tom respecting the Island had been only an attempt to re-arouse the interest he had once felt in that place and its history, that he might put it in competition with the hopeless longing now wasting his days. For a great span of his

life he had but one absorbing idea—the secret of the Bishop's Island; and so accustomed had he become to dealing with but one idea, that now he found it impossible to interpose anything between that girl and his hungry heart. He knew it would be best for him to avoid her; but what was knowledge and reason in such an untutored being as he? He did not pause to think if he were hoping for anything, or what it was he hoped for. He had only the one sovereign thought — that he'd give life and soul for the smiles of this fisherman's daughter, and that he could not banish her from his mind.

One bright, breezy, sunshiny April day, when round white clouds shone like satin in the sky, and larks were singing, and daisies showing their heads here and there, even on the inhospitable surface of the downs, Mary Martin put on her linen bonnet, a shawl of fine red wool, and going down to the village took her seat on an outside-car, bespoken for the occasion. It was not often that the daughters of Killard drove to Clonmore in such state; a cart with a board across, upholstered with an empty sack, and some sweet fresh straw spread on the bottom, was usually considered rather a stylish conveyance. But then Mary was an heiress with an independent fortune, and Edward Martin the richest fisherman in the village.

Mary Martin was going to Clonmore to give an agreeable surprise. No one had appointed to meet her there, and she had business of no kind to transact. She was simply driving over to Clonmore to give an agreeable surprise.

Her face showed how pleasant her mission must have been to her, for it was lighted up now with a quick bright smile, as she turned her head around and let her eyes

wander through the blue sunlit air blowing inland over the downs, now with motionless features sat placidly contemplating some creation of the imagination.

It was a day made of bright things for bright thinking. The soft blue sky, the soft white clouds, the soft green turf, the soft fresh breeze, full of sweetness from the cool ocean, all lightened the heart and drove the blood swiftly through the veins. Somehow, although there were many clouds in the sky they kept away from the sun, and the radiance never left the land all the way.

But before half the distance between Killard and Clonmore had been mastered, the radiance suddenly departed from Mary Martin's face; for just as she reached the fifth mile-stone a man sitting by the side of the road beckoned the carman to draw up, and Christopher Cahill came to her and shook her hand and spoke to her. He told her he had wandered out for a walk, had seen her coming along the road and thought he'd just stop the horse to bid her good-morning. He thought in his heart he had never seen Mary Martin looking so lovely.

She was glad to see him and hoped he was well.

Not particularly well; in fact, he had found the few miles rather tiring and had sat down to rest.

What was the matter with him? Nothing of any consequence, she hoped?

Well, of late, he had felt rather queer, but he did not know exactly what was the matter with him. He had sat down to rest and was thinking of getting back, but felt a little tired still.

She looked at the man more closely and perceived that he was not quite as full-coloured or stout as usual. Still she did not like to make the offer he would, she knew, be only too ready to accept. So she said:

'It's nothing, Christie Cahill; a few fine days like this will cure you.'

'I hope so,' he said wearily. He did not wish to damage his chance by going any further just now. After a moment's pause he added:

'Would you mind giving me a lift part of the way. I'd get down a mile outside the town.'

The humble pathos of the man's tones subdued the girl, and there was nothing for it but to ask him to take the other side of the car.

He got up. Each sat at the end of a seat. He turned in and rested his elbow on the cushion of the well, so that he could see her without moving his head. She sat upright with her face slightly turned towards him.

For a time neither spoke. In the end she became afraid of the silence, afraid he was maturing come words. It would be best to talk about something—anything.

'Is there any news in Clonmore?' she began in a timid voice. She did not at all like the situation, and she hoped they might meet no one on the road.

'No,' he answered absently. 'That is, I don't know of any. I'm not much good for news. I'm too stupid to remember it when I hear it, and that's the truth.' The dogged misery of his voice touched her keenly, but she made no reply. He went on, in a low monotone:

'I usen't to be this way long ago. But something is the matter with me that no doctor can cure. Something that will be the death of me, I know.' He did not look at her but kept his eyes fixed ahead.

'Don't say such things. You ought not. It's very wrong.' She was not uncomfortable, but unhappy. Was it not a pity that this man, who had always been kind to

her, should be so afflicted for her sake and she quite powerless to succour him!

'It's the truth,' he said firmly and somewhat sternly, adding, 'and there's no harm in telling the truth. But I don't care.'

'The worst thing you could say is that you don't care. You should care. You should try to get well, and a doctor could do you good.'

'No: not all the doctors in Ireland. They'd be no more use than so many cows.' He looked at her now, and a spasm went through his frame, and his eyes filled with tears.

'Mary——'

'Don't! Christie Cahill, don't!' she cried in a frightened voice.

'Mary——'

'I can't! I can't! You don't know all.'

'All what?' he asked wildly, with his tearful eyes fixed on her in passionate entreaty for a hearing

'You don't know what's bringing me to Clonmore to-day,' she answered, covering her face.

'What?' he demanded, with a great attempt to steady his voice.

'I'm going—I'm going——' she paused.

'What for? Tell me, Mary Martin, tell me, girl.'

'To meet someone.'

'To meet someone,' he repeated; at the same time his face became quite rigid and his voice hard and grating; but he never removed his eyes from her. 'To meet someone. Who?'

'Someone you know.'

'Someone I know!' He implied by his voice that she was treating him badly in not giving him all the

information at once. 'Someone I know? And who may that be?'

'You know.'

'I don't.'

'John Lane.'

'John Lane. Damn John Lane!' he cried wildly, his sternness broken down all at once, and a fury of jealousy carrying him beyond all control. 'He comes of a cursed race, Mary Martin; and if you won't give him up, maybe you'll be sorry some day, when the curse falls on him as it did on his father before him.'

Cahill was standing up when he uttered the last word, and as soon as it had left his lips he sprang off the car, and leaping over the low stone fence, struck off at a furious rate across the down, in the direction of Clonmore.

The driver looked around and found Mary weeping—

'Why didn't you tell me he was bothering you, Mary Martin, and he'd very soon find himself on the road without any trouble to himself.'

'No, no,' she answered through her tears, 'he wasn't annoying me.'

'Faith!' ejaculated the driver to himself, as he turned round, 'there's no knowing women. They're never easy until they're uneasy, and they have no comfort in their lives until they have someone that treats them badly.'

PART III.

ORDEAL BY GOLD.

CHAPTER I.

THE RETURN OF THE HEIR.

EARLY in the afternoon Mary Martin arrived in Clonmore. She had been greatly distressed and shaken by the interview, and the man's last words had helped to tear up much of the tender toleration with which she had formerly regarded her second suitor.

Why had he threatened her? and if he really loved her as he professed, how could he utter such words? He was so selfish that he would rather calamity should fall on John, and sorrow on her, than that she should be happy away from him.

That was too bad. He was a heartless man, and, she feared, a bad man; and no matter what her obligation had been to him she would think no more of him, cast him off and decline to speak to him. Why should she trouble her head about him?

She loved John and John loved her, and if this other man cared for her it was because of no encouragement she had ever given him.

Suppose for a moment she loved John and was not beloved in return, could she wish him evil? No, she would make any sacrifice for his sake. Suppose John loved someone else while she loved him, what should she do? Feel hardly towards the other girl? No. Why should she? Who that knew John could help

loving him? No one. No one in the whole wide world.

John, her brown-haired, strong, faithful darling, and he'd be here soon, soon, soon—this very day, in an hour or little more!

He'd be home, never to go away again. He would not even follow the dangerous business of her father; but live securely on the firm land, in the sunshine. Oh, what delicious long summer days they should spend together on the beach and downs of Killard! How happy she should be when, once more, she was by his side, and could feel his strong arm and know that they were to be separated no more!

She would do everything he wished, down to his lightest desires. It would be a paradise on earth, almost too happy for endurance. In a little time her own John would be standing there. She should look into his eyes and feel the pressure of his hand.

The car had set her down in the yard of the Clonmore Arms, the hotel at which the coach John Lane was to come by stopped.

She asked the bandy-legged ostler whether people usually got down outside in the street or in the yard.

'If they have luggage,' answered the man, 'they get down here; if not, they get down outside, that's generally.'

So she resolved to wait in the yard. It was quieter than outside. John did not know she was coming to Clonmore to meet him. She had asked her mother if she might, and her mother had consented, declining to go with her on the ground of making preparations to receive the traveller; but really because she thought the young people would be quite enough for one another,

and would not object to being alone for the first few hours.

Mary was not glad David Lane had died, but somehow, ever since his death, she had breathed more freely. She had a morbid horror of the Bishop's Island. She was not free from the superstitious feelings with which the people of Killard regarded it. At the least she thought David Lane had been a cruel, unnatural father to drive his only son away from him; and she believed that he had come by the gold in some unfair manner.

John himself had over and over again derided those ideas about Darkness; still there was much which could not be explained by anything known to the people around, and although she did not wholly accept the general belief, she could not rid her mind of the thought that there might be something in it. But as far as her John went it counted for nothing.

John's disposition did not in the least resemble his father's, and the son was free from any physical defect such as his father had laboured under. In other respects, too, her John was so unlike. He had gay spirits, pleasant words, was fond of being with people; whereas his father had been dark, morose, would associate with no one, own no friend but the Fool.

There was no taint or flaw in her darling John. His heart was whole and all hers, as hers was his; and he would be here presently—here, standing with her, with his arms around her, as in the days long ago.

'I'll sit where I am,' she thought, 'on this bench in the shadows until the coach is in the yard and the horses are stopped. I'll never raise my head the whole time until the horses stop, and then I'll look up and see him, and he'll see me, and then——'

She uttered a long low sigh of happiness, clasped her hands in her lap, and keeping her eyes on the ground, listened for wheels.

There were two or three others also waiting in the yard, but they took no notice of her, and she was left to her listening and her dreams.

In the street fronting the hotel there were people, too, expecting the coach. It wanted half an hour of the time appointed for its arrival when a low-sized, stout man, with a rather red face, came quickly down the street and entered a public-house directly opposite the archway leading to the hotel yard.

On the right-hand side of the shop was a door. This the man opened, and went into a small taproom, and struck violently on the table with his clenched fist. A boy appeared in a moment.

'Two glasses of raw whisky,' he ordered. When it was brought he swallowed it at two gulps, then approached the window and looked out through a narrow slip between the top of a high zinc screen and the blind.

From his position he commanded a view of the hotel and the loungers in front of it. He could also see up into the yard, the people there waiting for the coach, and Mary Martin sitting on a stone bench in the shadow of the wall. The taproom was empty, and the boy had closed the door when he left.

The man breathed heavily through his dilated nostrils, caught the top of the zinc screen in his fat red hands, and fixed his eyes on the figure of the girl.

A quarter of an hour passed without the slightest alteration in either his or the girl's attitude. Then he turned round and again struck the table with his clenched hand.

The boy appeared.

'Two glasses of raw whisky,' he said slowly.

These he swallowed as he had the preceding ones, and when he had finished and the door was shut, went back to his former post and old occupation.

In a little time he looked at the clock over the gateway; it wanted still five minutes of the arrival of the coach. Again he left the window, again summoned the boy, gulped down two more glasses of the fiery spirit, and with a gurgle in his throat and a wild red glare in his uncertain eyes resumed his watching.

At length the rumble of approaching wheels could be heard. The ostler came out and stood, full of importance, looking up the street, shading his eyes with his hand.

The boots, in his shirt-sleeves, was on the steps leading up to the hotel, and in the doorway appeared the burly, bland proprietor, prepared to receive any who might desire to put up at the Clonmore Arms.

Four smoking horses came in sight; the leaders were seized by the ostler, the boots opened the coach door at the hotel side, the bland proprietor smiled at the travellers as they went up the steps. There were several outside passengers, most of whom alighted.

Three retained their seats, an elderly woman with a child, and a young brown-bearded, sunburnt young man in a blue cloth pilot coat and straw hat.

Before the coach was ready to go into the yard, a slight female figure, wearing a red shawl and linen bonnet, came round under the heads of the leaders, looked at the young man on the box, and beckoned to him.

In an instant he was down in the middle of the street, in another the arms of the young man were wound round

her, and her right arm lay on his shoulders, and their faces met.

It had been all very well to plan sitting in that yard waiting until John should be driven in; she had held out valiantly for some seconds, but then the thing became an impossibility, and she did not at the moment care if all Clonmore saw their meeting.

Mary and young Lane went into the hotel yard, and in a few minutes a car, the one in which Mary had arrived that morning, drove out with Mary Martin and John Lane on opposite sides of it.

Two of the travellers by the coach crossed the street and entered the public-house. They belonged to Clonmore, and evidently knew the place well, for they nodded to the man behind the counter, and ordered something to be brought to them into the taproom.

Upon entering the room they found the man who had watched the arrival of the coach walking up and down in a very excited manner; his face was purple, and his eyes inflamed.

'Is that you, Christie Cahill?' cried one of the newcomers familiarly. 'Do you know who came by the coach to-day? Young Lane, of the Bishop's Island; his sweetheart, Mary Martin, was here to meet him, and faith, a pretty girl she is, and no mistake!'

'That for your information!' shouted Cahill, striking the speaker a blow in the face with his fist.

The man fell, but was quickly up again, and a desperate fight ensued.

Cahill was mad with rage and whisky; he struck out wildly, not seeing where his blows fell, and not caring. Now he hit the man, now the wall, now the door, no matter so long as he struck and swore.

The third man tried to interfere, but a random blow sent him across the room.

The landlord and the man who helped in the shop strove to separate the combatants, but failed, and the fight went on with unabated ferocity. Had all Cahill's blows struck the traveller, he could not have withstood the onslaught, for Cahill was by far the more powerful man. But Cahill took no care to fend, and was getting severely handled.

A boy was sent running for the police. Four arrived. As they entered the room Cahill paused a moment, and looked at them. Then suddenly, before they could seize him, he caught up a chair, shivered it to pieces with one blow against the wall, and brandishing the back and legs above his head, shouted :

'Ay, come on ! all of you, any of you, one after another or all together, I don't care which ! I don't care whether I'm hanged for you or killed by you ; only come on and see the fun out !'

No one stirred. The police were afraid to approach ; they knew that the first man would in all likelihood fall with a shattered skull.

One of the policemen whispered for a few seconds with the others. Then all at once the table was seized and pushed swiftly towards him. He lowered his arms to protect himself, and the instant he did so a general rush of all present bore him heavily to the ground.

He struggled desperately, but in the end was overwhelmed and secured with handcuffs and cord, and carried writhing and cursing to the police-station.

'What's the matter with Christie Cahill ?' asked the people who knew him, as he went by between the policemen.

'Mad, or mad drunk!' was the reply of those who formed the crowd following him.

Mary Martin and John Lane knew nothing of the disturbance in the public-house, for it had not attracted any exterior attention until they had got out of the street.

As they drove along the lonely road to Killard in the sweet, fresh afternoon, they talked over a great variety of matters. He had heard of his father's death in a letter from Mary, and knew that Tom had been appointed steward during his absence.

Each of the lovers leaned an elbow on the well-cushion of the car; he held one of her hands in his; her face was turned towards him, his towards her; and when the conversation paused now and then, he bent still lower, and she did not move away.

As they reached the fifth milestone, Mary looked into his face with full grateful eyes, and said:

'Oh, John, you don't know how glad I am for many sakes that you are home once more.'

'My own true Mary!' he murmured, pressing her hand; 'and I am glad to be back. It is so good to be here near you, my darling.'

'Yes,' she resumed, 'I have been a good deal troubled by something.'

'Troubled by something, Mary! What was it troubled you? Nothing serious, I hope?'

'You must promise me, if I tell you, not to be angry with anyone. It is all over now, once you are here.'

'I'll promise you anything, Mary. Has my coming back banished your trouble?'

'Yes; it will altogether, I think.'

'Tell me now. Since your trouble is gone away because I am here, how can I be angry with anyone? In-

deed, it seems to me just now as if I never could be angry with anyone again.'

'Well, someone has been saying civil things to me.'

'I'd like to see the person could say uncivil things to you, Mary, and I'd very soon let him know his mistake.'

'What I mean is, someone has been speaking to me as if I never knew you.'

'Oh, I see! and who was it?'

'Christie Cahill.'

'Christie Cahill!' He laughed long and heartily.

'And what did Mary say to Christie Cahill?'

'I told him I could not listen to him, and I wouldn't. I spoke about you. But don't laugh at him, John, dear. It made me very sorrowful and very frightened to see him the way he was.'

'Well, there, I won't laugh at him. Indeed, Mary, all I wonder at is that half the town of Clonmore and all the village of Killard have not been doing what he did.'

'But all the village knows about you and me, John, and no one there would say anything like that to me.'

'And didn't he know about me?'

'Yes; and that was the worst of it, don't you see?'

The young man frowned, and looked down a minute. Then, raising his face with a quick smile to her troubled face, he said:

'Well, Mary, in less than a month you'll have something on your finger that will put all such notions out of his head, and between this and then I'll never stir away from Killard; and as he knows about me, and I'll be there the whole time, he isn't likely to bother you any more, my darling.'

She leaned her head on his shoulder with a delicious sense of security and peace. All was now at rest for

ever; no more going away—no more importunity from Cahill. Her John had returned, and was here; her head lay on his shoulder, and it was spring all round and summer in her heart.

'And so,' said he, after a while, 'Tom is still living on the Island all by himself, just as my father used?'

'Yes. But I believe he has dogs to frighten anyone not wanted there. He is not to leave it until he gives it up to you.'

'Oh, then, I suppose I must enter into formal possession of my ancestral acre,' he said with mock dignity. 'Of course, I should like to observe proper ceremony. What a pity there isn't a brass band in Clonmore; I might go preceded by the band and my tenantry. But no, that can't be. My tenantry must remain on the Island to welcome the heir. I hope my tenantry will do the thing properly—have a triumphal arch, and a laneway of pretty girls with bouquets all up the steps to the castle. The castle of Bishop's Island won't look badly in print. Then, of course, I'll give a sumptuous banquet to my tenantry in the old oak hall, built in the time of McMurragh. Don't you think, Mary, I ought to remit half-a-year's rent to my tenantry? It's quite the right thing to do. But then, you see, I'll have a lot of expenses this year. I'll talk the matter over with my lawyer. I'm afraid I can't afford to remit the half-year's rent, as I have to get at least one pane of glass put into the southern room. Stop, I'll have a stained-glass window, with a history of my wonderful wanderings in foreign lands, and my——'

He paused, and looked at her.

'Your what, John?' she asked with a smile.

'My wonderful love for my wonderful darling.'

They discussed a great variety of subjects; now they laughed together, now were serious over the death of the young man's father; again they were tender with one another. It seemed the shortest eleven miles Mary had ever travelled when they drove up at the white cottage on the edge of the southern downs.

What an evening they had! The young man and girl seated at one side of the chimney-place, and the woman and man of the house at the other, and a few favoured friends in various parts of the room. All he had to tell, and all he had to hear! It seemed as though a century would not have given room enough for talk.

He had not been quite as successful at the diggings this time; the place was too well explored now, and claims of sensational values had become exceptional. But, comparatively, he had done very well, and he had, while yet a young man, made enough to satisfy him for the present, and to last him, with prudence, all his life.

He kept his listeners wondering or laughing all the time, and everyone thought what a lucky girl Mary Martin was to have so clever and bright and rich a sweetheart.

In the middle of one of his stories the door opened, and Tom the Fool entered.

'John Lane, why don't you come to your own house, the house left you by your father, and that I'm keeping warm for you?' Tom would not sit down, but stood in the middle of the floor reproaching the heir.

Young Lane got up and shook hands with Tom, and thanked him for his trouble in looking after the property while he was away, and promised to go over and take formal possession the next day.

'Come now !—come at once, and take your own ! It's to the Bishop's you should have faced—not here !'

'I'll come to-morrow, Tom ; it's too late now. Won't you sit down, now all care is off you when I'm back, and you can sleep ashore to-night ?'

'No, no ! I'll do as I was told !' And without another word he left, banging the door after him angrily.

CHAPTER II.

THE HEIR IN POSSESSION.

THE next morning, like the former, was fresh and full of sunlight. John Lane came up early from the village, where he had slept and breakfasted at Martin's. It had been arranged during the previous night that he and Mary were to walk along the cliffs to the Bishop's, he was to go to the Island, take formal possession from Tom, stay a few minutes, return to the village, and spend the day with her.

All, with the exception of his going to the Island, seemed too good to be believed. She did not know why, but the thought of his once more setting foot in that region of doubt filled her with vague uneasiness. But with the bright sunshine lying on the downs and sea, and the larks singing high in heaven and John by her side, it was hard to feel anything but light-hearted and joyful, as they bruised the short, brittle grass under their feet and chatted on the way.

'I'm very sorry,' he said, 'that you can't be present at the imposing ceremony of my entering upon possession of my ancestral acre. It would elevate me in your eyes,

and flatter your vanity to see me, while seated in the great hall, receive, in the hollow of O'Brien de Lacy Lane's famous chasen shield, the keys of the locked blacking box containing the three bullet-sinkers used by me on my own private lines when I was a boy.'

'I'd rather you hadn't to go, John,' she answered, after a forced laugh; 'I want you for myself this day, the first day after so many years.'

'Now, don't put it in that gloomy way, as if I was going to make a voyage to Africa in a leaky currach, and with only twenty-four hours' provisions. Of course you can't be expected to cross that famous suspension bridge, although, I hear, it's a new one. But at the most, we won't be separated by the sea more than twenty minutes or half an hour, or by more than a few yards, and, after our long separation, you oughtn't to mind that. You're not afraid the bridge will break? I have grown somewhat stouter, and my beard is longer and heavier than when I was last here, but I'm not yet become such a porpoise as to cause any fear on that account.'

'No,' she answered, still thoughtfully, 'I'm not afraid of the rope, but I don't like the Island. I never did, and who could?'

'Why, you ought to like it. Isn't it my native country? Is it not now all my landed possessions? I am thinking of making great improvements on it. What do you think of building a harbour and a railway? That district between Lane House and the Low lands on the sea-bar is very dangerous, both by reason of its exposed situation and its ruggedness. Suppose I have a lift made. You know that in big buildings they have things you get into, and are whisked to the top like a rocket. But no, a lift would never do; it would be too undignified. As to

the people of the Island—I mean the bull-dogs—I think I'll encourage emigration among them, get up a line of steamers between the Island and Killard, and pay their passages half-way, leaving it at the option of the captains to carry them the remainder free, or heave them over the side.'

When, at length, they had arrived, John found the Fool sitting on the inner edge of the cliff awaiting him.

'We must have a regular leave-taking,' said John, 'for you know, Mary, I'm going over the sea, into foreign parts again. Perhaps I may run great risks with the inhabitants, and, in any case, the leave-taking must be in the proper way.' He put his arm round her with a smile. 'Good-bye, Mary, and take care of yourself all the time I am away, and often think of your poor old John, won't you? And sit down on the grass until I come back. You needn't be afraid, there are no earwigs, and don't go too near the cliff; and, Mary, remember to be true to me, and to think always while I am away that my heart is with you. Good-bye.'

He kissed her playfully, laughed, and, releasing her, was quickly in the meshes of the bridge.

As she watched him cross, two large tears stole slowly into her eyes, and ran quietly down her cheeks. She did not notice the tears, although they blurred his figure. Her mind was busy with the past, and it seemed as though John was once more bidding her adieu for a long while. But when she saw him erect on the opposite cliff her face brightened, she dismissed her foolish fancies, smiled, and kissed her hand to him.

He returned the salute and the smile gaily, and waving his hand to her, disappeared with the Fool in the direction of the hut.

'You needn't be afraid of the dogs, John Lane, I put them in the room you used to sleep in.'

Preceded by the Fool, the young man went to the room in which his father had breathed his last.

Now that Mary was out of sight, and his back turned upon the great world, and he found himself once more face to face with long familiar sights and sounds, some of the old feelings, too, crowded back upon his mind.

Time had very greatly diminished the sentiment he had once entertained for his dead father; but the fact that the only parent he could remember well had passed away for ever from the lonely land, filled him with regret. He remembered vividly his own life here. How narrow and barren it seemed to-day! He had been sent away from that place when his soul was nothing more than a blank, save for the little harvest his acute and observant senses had made within the monotonous routine of that circumscribed spur of rock.

He had come back a man, full of knowledge of the great world, and of men, and of love. The gloom of his former days seemed rather the memory of some previous state of existence, some inferior development of human nature, than the record of events which had really occurred in a life-time.

Fifteen years ago he was little better than a savage, to-day he passed as a man of comparative culture. And there was this strange father of his, with that cruel expulsion, that expulsion which had seemed so hard to endure then, but which had borne such good fruit—knowledge, wealth, and love.

But what had been this secret after all? Had the bygone misery and isolation of his race been brought about by a little gold? He now had gold fairly got, more gold

than any of his people ever dreamed of. Had all their gold—the gold which had been the source of so much pain and trouble at one time—been dissipated? Should he never know further than he now did?

As soon as they were in the hut, Tom closed the door and said:

'John Lane, I was to stay here until you came, minding the Island for you. Now you're here, and I'll be going soon. This is your Island, but there are some things hidden, and your father, David Lane, my friend, told me I was not to let anyone know of them but you, and that when once I showed them to you I was to go and leave you.'

This looked as if he were to know everything at last. He had no curiosity; he would have preferred ignorance. He felt perfectly content to remain as he was, and shrank back a little from re-opening, as it seemed, the baneful book of his family.

'I kept my word to your father, my friend David Lane, and often when there were storms that old she-wolf used to yell at me and try to frighten me out of my promise and make me run away, but I stuck to my word, given to your father, my friend David Lane.'

'Well, Tom, go on, I'm ready.'

He wished to have it over as speedily as possible, and get back to the external sunshine and his sweetheart Mary on the green downs.

In a few minutes the deed had been taken from the box, then the hearthstone was raised, and the paper which Cahill had found on the road that hot day years ago was in John Lane's hands.

Tom allowed the stone to fall back to its original position. Having placed the young man's toes at the chipped

spot in the outer edge, and, with his face to the wall, he took up a dried mackerel and put it in the right hand of the young man, so arranging that the tail of the mackerel pointed towards the door behind, the head towards the fire-place.

'Now, John Lane,' said the Fool, 'I am to leave you and go ashore; that's all I was to do. You can make what use you like of the two dogs. I bought them with your father's money, to keep his son's property safe.'

Without waiting for a word of reply, Tom opened the door, went out, leaving the young man standing with his toes to the outer edge of the hearthstone, a dried mackerel in one hand, and the paper in the other.

When Mary saw a head rise over the surface of the Island, she at first thought John was coming, but, with a little throb of disappointment, discovered her mistake. To be sure, John had not yet been away much more than half-an-hour; but then, why didn't he come with the Fool?

As soon as Tom landed, she asked him about John.

'He's on his father's property that I kept safe for him this long time, and it's only right he should stop there a while, Mary Martin, out of respect to him that's dead, his father, my friend David Lane.'

As to how soon the young man was coming back, or what he was doing, Tom would answer nothing, and he became so angry when the girl pressed, that she had to let him alone.

'Are you waiting for him?' he asked.

'Yes, he told me.'

'Well, I'm going to Killard,' and with these words he stooped down, and, lifting the loop over the eye of the

hook, let go the rope, and cast the Island adrift from the mainland.

Mary uttered a cry of terror.

'What did you do that for?' she asked. 'How will he get back again?'

'The way his father did before him,' answered the Fool sullenly, as he turned on his heel.

Mary grew nearly sick with disappointment and dim fears, and when the figure of the Fool grew small in the distance, she felt as though she too had been cast off into solitude.

A long while she sat motionless, with dull, sad eyes fixed on the Island, but no John came. The sun went slowly through the serene sky, the long swells broke upon the shore, the wild larks sang in the blue vault; these she neither saw nor heard. Her eyes were directed towards the Island, as though he had indeed crossed the ocean to seek once more a long, dreary absence from her. What could be keeping him? He knew she was waiting there. He knew she would not move until he came; and now it was ever so long since Tom had cast off the rope and gone towards the village.

The sun had passed the zenith, and was on his downward course. Why! oh, why didn't John come, just for one little moment, and wave his hand and smile to her, and say some cheering words across that chasm, across that abyss, which had been a space separating the former Lanes from humanity, more utterly than the ocean separated its shores?

At last she saw his figure rise out of the hollow, and, with a joyous cry, she sprang up, and held out her arms to him.

He approached the edge of the cliff, but there was no

smile on his face, no pleasant wave of the hand, his brows were knit, and his arms hung by his side as though his pre-occupation prevented his giving them attention. When he stood on the brink he looked at her with abstracted eyes, that scarcely recognised her. In a moment her heart fell. There was something wrong—something direfully wrong—with this man to whom she had given her whole heart and soul.

Where was the bright look now, that she had never missed when they met in the old time? Where was the elasticity and sweep of his motions, as though he would fly to her side? Gone! and a man with care on his face looked in indifference at her across the chasm, and beckoned her authoritatively to attend.

'Where is the Fool gone?' he demanded.

'To Killard, John,' she answered in a dull, sick fear.

'You must go after him to Killard, and tell him I want him to come back at once. Mind, at once!'

There was almost a menacing emphasis in his tones.

'But—but, John, aren't you coming back? Dinner will be ready, and you said——'

'I know—I know!' he interrupted impatiently. 'But do as I tell you.'

'And when will you come?'

'I can't say now. I'll send word.'

'Am I to come back with Tom?'

He paused a moment, and her heart bounded with a sudden hope.

'No,' he answered. 'You'd better not come. Send me the Fool, and I'll let you know by him when I'll be ashore. Go now, and don't lose any time.'

Down went her hopes to a darker depth than they had yet entered.

'Good-bye, John, until I see you again.'

There were tears in her eyes and terror in her voice.

'Good-bye,' and without another word he crossed the Island and disappeared.

She stood a while immovable; she could not take in all at once the full signification of what had occurred. The scene appeared symbolic, and she yet wanted the key to understand it. All she grasped was that John was on the Island, and was not coming back as he had arranged; but behind this she felt the black shadow of some inexplicable sorrow creep. All at once her eyes lighted on the rope hanging down by the side of the Island. This helped her a step further in her thoughts. John Lane, he whom she loved above all others on earth, had crossed to that Island full of gaiety and affection. When next she saw him the gaiety and affection no longer appeared, and she was separated from him by the chasm which had separated his father and grandfather from all that was good. Oh, what a sorrowful morrow to yesterday was this dark day!

But John had told her he wanted the Fool at once. So she walked quickly to the village.

She found Tom roasting potatoes at a cottage fire.

'Tom,' she said, 'you are to run back to the Island as fast as you can; John Lane wants you at once.'

'I'm done with the Island. I gave it up to the rightful owner, and it's a long day since I ate potatoes roasted on a natural hearth—there are only fire-grates on the Bishop's.'

'But you must go at once; he said you were,' cried the girl hastily.

'I can't take the potatoes and the hearth with me, can I?'

He was quite deliberate in words and manners, not appearing in the least affected by the girl's impatience, but turning the potatoes so as to heat them evenly.

She stamped her foot in exasperation.

'But I tell you you must go at once; leave the potatoes!'

'To be burnt to cinders?'

'I'll sit down and mind them.'

'And won't eat them while I'm away?'

'No, no. For goodness' sake, go! Go, dear Tom.'

'Very well; I'll leave them on your soul.'

He was away upwards of an hour and half.

'You didn't eat any?' he asked, for she was still sitting by the fire, minding potatoes.

'No, Tom; but they were too burnt, and I got you more.'

'You're a decent girl, Mary Martin, and deserve one of the Lanes; and faith! John Lane is looking like his father to-day, and you'll be a happy woman.'

'When is he coming ashore?'

'He told me to say he isn't coming ashore to-night; and that he's leaving Killard to-morrow, and that I must go back to the Island while he's away. And sorry I am, for there isn't a natural hearth in it.'

'And where did he say he was going to to-morrow, Tom?'

'He didn't tell me. It isn't likely he'd tell me. Why his father never told me anything in all his life.'

'And did he say when he'd be back?'

'No.'

'And' (tremulously) 'didn't he send any other message to me, Tom dear?'

'Not a message, not a message. Ah! those potatoes have the real taste; there's nothing like a hearth for——'

But she had run out of the cottage before he could conclude, and was hastening in the direction of home, with the tears streaming down her face, and a strange choking tightness at her throat.

It was late in the day when Mary told her father and mother the news brought from the Island by Tom. She tried to put a good face on the matter, and said how John had talked of selling the Island. Perhaps this sudden determination of leaving Killard had something to do with that.

The father shook his head, grew very grave, and said he didn't like the look of it. But when Mrs. Martin put her arms round her daughter, and whispered, 'My poor child! my poor Mary!' the girl broke down completely, and burst into sobs.

That evening, as on the previous one, a few of Martin's neighbours dropped in and heard with astonishment of young Lane's absence, and the alteration in his plans. There was a good deal of speculation, in which the most gloomy was only hinted at, out of regard to the feelings of the girl. But it appeared quite plain to be seen that the villagers regarded what had happened as a disaster, and attributed it to the baleful influence of the bane or curse under which the Island, or the Lanes, or both together laboured, and were destined to labour as long as any connection existed between that place and that race.

When Mary was in her own room that night, she read over and over again these words in the last letter she had received from him:

'And when I am once more back in Killard, nothing on earth shall ever separate us any more, either in body or soul. We shall be one, with no space between us, and no thoughts that are not shared by both.'

Now he had been but one day at home. He had gone to that Island promising to be back with her in a little time. His whole manner to her had been changed by his brief visit. He had not looked like himself or acted towards her like himself when he came out of the hut. He had broken his arrangement with her, sent her back alone to Killard, told her she was not to come for him, and gave her a message by the Fool, saying he was going away from the village in the morning. Not a word of excuse, not a word of regret, not a word of love. He had sent such a message as he might to any man in the village whose faith he could not fully trust.

Between him and her now lay the dark downs, the dark chasm, and, darkest of all, the sable pall of some invisible influence that had been the evil destiny of his race, and of which she could not conceive the settled form. Oh, misery of doubt! Oh, agony of fear! Oh, full-throated love, frozen into silence by terrors!

CHAPTER III.

THE ALTERED MAN.

NEXT morning Mary awoke tired, unrefreshed. She had wept herself to sleep, and her eyes were swollen and weary-looking. Her limbs felt heavy and dull, and the brilliant sunlight was no more than the faded spectre of the sunlight that had been.

At breakfast there was little talk, and that not of a very cheerful character.

'I don't like his staying on the Island and not sending even a word of excuse. I don't like his staying on the Island at all. The Island wouldn't have him when he was young, and I took him in; not that I boast of it—

but it is true I took him in; and now, the first moment he goes back to the Island he breaks his word. I don't like the look of it at all.'

Edward Martin looked very grave as he said these words. Evidently he was not speaking out all his mind; there was plainly something like anger behind.

'Whist, Edward!' said the woman, trying, by a glance, to direct her husband's mind to the drooped head and crushed appearance of the girl. 'The boy is all right. He'll be here to-day and tell us all about it, you may be sure.'

The father did not perceive his wife's design. He was considering John Lane's conduct, not his daughter's condition.

'What he'll say to-day won't undo what he did yesterday. A man ought to be always the same. It won't do to be one thing to-day and another to-morrow. When I find a man changing about like that I begin to suspect him of changing in greater things.'

'Don't say such things, Edward. Look at the poor girl,' whispered the woman of the house.

His slow eyes sought Mary and dwelt a long time on her. In his glance there was more of thought than love It was quite plain he could not shake off the ideas which followed Lane's action. But he could keep silent for his daughter's sake, and he did.

It was not until the afternoon John Lane appeared at Martin's cottage. His face was pale and his manner abstracted and dull. All sprightliness had left him, and on meeting with Mary he merely shook her by the hand and sat down without speaking. The father and mother were present, and he never, at such times, went beyond touching her hand or stealing his arm quietly around her

as they sat by night in the chimney-corner. He used to hold her hand a little while and soften his eyes, and look lovingly in her face. Now he merely took her hand formally, and let it go without any display of particular emotion towards her.

This almost broke the girl down. She dropped into a seat and turned her tearful eyes upon the ground, but no tears fell.

'John Lane,' said Edward Martin, when they were all seated, 'Tom the Fool told us you were leaving Killard. Where are you going to?'

It was plain the fisherman had made up his mind to find out the intentions of the young man.

'Yes,' answered Lane. 'I have to leave Killard on business; but at present I think it best not to say where I'm going.'

'Why not? If your business is lawful you ought to let us know. We are not likely to do you any harm.'

'That I'm sure of, but I think it better to keep the matter to myself. It's very peculiar business, and must be done all by myself; it is best no one should know anything about it.'

'You ought to tell me, and you ought to tell my girl. You promised not to leave Killard again until you were married, and now you are going and won't say where. That is not right, John Lane.'

The young man got up, and a sudden excitement came upon him.

'I tell you you must be satisfied with what I have said. You don't know everything; you don't know the way my mind is.'

'But I ought, John Lane, and my girl ought too. That Island did no good to those before you, and now it makes you give up your promise.'

Martin's voice was stern and sad. He himself could now scarcely resist the belief that the very air of the Island wrought injuriously on the Lanes. If it had any general evil influence why had it not affected the Fool?

'There's no use,' said the young man, pacing up and down rapidly. 'I tell you there's no use. I must go, and at once, and I can't tell.'

'Am I to know now when you are coming back?'

Lane paused a moment to think, and then resumed his walk, answering distractedly, 'I don't know. For God's sake don't ask me any questions now. You don't know what I'm going through.'

'Well, anyway we ought to be told when you will be back. When are you to be in Killard again?'

'That's out of my power to tell. I can't guess.'

'Is it about the sale of the Island you're going away?'

John started, paused and looked sharply at Martin. Then he seemed to be satisfied, and answered readily, 'No, I do not think of selling the Bishop's just now.'

'Ah!' breathed Martin, looking gloomily at his daughter's affianced husband. 'And when will you be back?'

'I can't say. I don't know.'

'In a month?'

'Perhaps so, and perhaps not. I don't think there's any good in your asking me questions.'

'I want to talk to you outside,' said Martin, with additional sternness in his tones. When the two were alone on the road he continued, 'John Lane, I had a great liking for you; I brought you up as if you were my own son.'

'You did! You did! Oh! if you knew all, you would leave me to myself.'

Martin waved the words of the other aside and went on: 'When you had grown to be a man, I gave my consent to your marrying my daughter.'

'For God's sake stop!' cried the young man piteously, 'you don't know what's before me now. Don't drive me desperate. I am in a wild state of mind as it is, and a hard word might drive me wrong.'

'I am going to say no hard word to you. I am not going to say anything of the past. But that Island has been bad to those that have gone before you; and you, who were good till you went there, change the moment you put your foot on its dark sides. Now, I can't allow my child to go to a man who seems falling into ways like your father had. You said you'd marry my girl in a month. You'll never marry my girl, John Lane, never, while I have breath in my body, until I am satisfied there is no harm for you or her on that Bishop's Island —until you tell me all!'

Pale and trembling, the young man stood regarding the fisherman.

'Let me alone!' he implored. 'Let me alone, sir, and God may help me through. Here—I'll tell you. No—no. Not now. Not now.'

'And now, John Lane,' said Martin, with the emphasis of a final determination, 'You are never to darken my door, or change word with my daughter, until all is made fair to me, and I am satisfied she will be safe; until you promise me never again to touch the Island—and I give you two months to think over the matter. If the two months beat you, it must all be as if you had never courted Mary Martin. Now, you may go your way, and I hope you will show yourself fair in the end. I can do no better for you and her.'

'Two months! You don't know all. I can't promise

not to go to the Bishop's after two months. Give me more time, Edward Martin, out of consideration for all you have done for me in the past.'

'No, sir!' said Martin, indignantly. 'You have heard what I have said, and I'm not a man to go back of my word.' With these words he left the young man, re-entered the cottage and closed the door.

'Mary,' said the fisherman to his daughter, 'I have been speaking to John Lane. He is going away on business he will not tell me of, and he doesn't know when that business will be finished. I don't like the change that has come over this young man, and until he explains all to me, and satisfies me about himself he is not to come here again, and you are not to see him or speak to him. He was to have married you in a month, and now he does not know whether this business will be finished in two. In fairness to you I cannot allow matters to stand as they are for more than two months. If at the end of that time he doesn't make all right with me, it must be as if he had never asked you to be his wife. I have no ill-feeling against the young man, but he has not done what he said he'd do, and he will not tell me why. I have a right to take care of your future, and I will not give you to a man who has secrets that have been a scandal to the parish of old, and might be in his case again.'

She listened in a white despair. Her lips were parted, her breath came slowly and softly, the white of her eyes made a perfect circle under the lids. She had no voice to speak, and as her father finished she had no ears for more. She had fainted, and but for her mother would have fallen to the ground.

'My child! My child! My poor Mary, is it for this I brought you up? Is it for this you were the pride of my

heart? Oh, wake up, my child! Oh, God is too good, too sweet to take you from us, my child! My child, don't you hear the heart of your mother speaking?'

They carried her into her own room, and laid her on her white bed, and chafed her hands, and sprinkled water over her face. In time she revived and sat up.

'What is the matter?' she asked feebly.

'You fainted, Mary, at what your father said.' Mother and child were now alone.

'Ah! I remember. But, mother dear, why did you wake me? I had no pain then, but now, now, now!' She threw herself down, and lay in a tearless despair.

The mother sat by the bedside stroking the cold young hand. Had it come to this with her child? Had her daughter placed all her affection on a man whose father had laboured under a curse, whose life had been passed away outside mankind, in opposition to the will of Heaven? Oh, it was hard to sit there and think of it. Hard on her, the mother of an only child, to sit there and see her stricken darling, pale and tearless, white and silent, wan and beyond cure. For now that the old curse had fallen on the young Lane, she would rather see her child in her winding-sheet than in a wedding-dress at his side. No doubt the young man might still have some little likeness to his former self, but that would soon pass away, and he would become like his father in all things; and perhaps in time his speech would be taken from him, and he would go inland and seek a wife such as his mother had been, afflicted with silence and unhearing ears. And how would her daughter bear to see that? Ah, she never could! She'd be dead before that came to pass. She knew the deep quiet nature of the girl, and she felt certain death would overtake the wounded life before such things could arise.

Then her thought paused awhile, and rushed off to contemplate their vacant home and deserted hearts, when the girl had been taken from them before her time and laid in the green graveyard on the hill. Why, oh, why was all this misery to fall upon them? What had they ever done that they should be so cruelly tried?

All at once she found an answer to her question.

This terrible affliction—this ruin to the happiness of their only child—was a judgment upon them for ever having admitted the son of that dead heathen Lane under their roof. Yes, it was all plain now. If they had never taken in that boy, their girl would never have cared for this man. It was a judgment on them for having shown favour to one whom Heaven had marked with a curse, and Darkness had adopted as its own. They deserved it all. But why should their innocent child suffer for the sin of the parent? and had she, the girl's mother, been one of those who brought down this withering blight on that young girl, her daughter, her own flesh and blood?

She paused a moment, appalled by this question. Suddenly her mind went back to the past, to the morning long years ago, when her husband, having found the outcast on the downs, carried him home in his arms and set the boy on the floor of their house. She recalled how, later in the morning—when the Fool came back with the news that David Lane had cast off his son for ever—her husband had declared his intention of keeping the boy, and bringing him up under his own roof, in daily intercourse with their own child. She now could recall her shrinking from the boy, and her horror when she heard his first effort to speak her child's name. She clearly saw, in the dark past, how she had forebodings of awful evil, and had said all she durst say to get her husband to

give up his will. But he had persisted, and here was what had come of it! It was all his doing. She had no hand in it.

'No; I did not want the boy in the house. I wanted Edward to send him away, to keep a wholesome distance between him and our child; but he would not. He would have his way. I had no hand in it. He did it all; did it all to our child; did it all to his child; did it all to the only little one Heaven ever sent me to nourish at my breast. It was he brought the curse into the house. He brought the blight on my child. And I warned him in time, but he would not be said by me, and now look at this!'

For the first time in all her life the anger of the woman rose up against her husband. Her maternal instincts overcame every other feeling; she rose in a rage of grief, and passed into the outer room, where Edward Martin sat gloomily looking into the fire, with eyes that saw not.

Pale with conflicting passions she stood before her husband, and cried, in a suppressed voice of angry reproach:

'Now are you satisfied, Edward Martin? Now are you content? You wouldn't be warned by me in time. I told you if you took in the boy you'd take in the curse; now the man that was the boy is gone away and has left the mark of the curse on your own child and mine. You wouldn't believe me then; maybe you don't believe me now. Go in and see. Go in and see your doings. Go in and see your daughter, my daughter, my only child, withered up by your unnatural act in taking in one that was under the wing of Darkness. Oh, if you won't believe me now, you have eyes of your own, go in and see your handiwork on our child; the man is not to blame for this work; he is under a curse, and could not help

his part of this sorrow. But you could. You brought him, and would not be said by me; I, who had a mother's knowledge, a mother's sure feeling about that boy and my child. He's not to blame for his part in this, but you! you! You, her father! And when she is dead, as die she will, and I wake up in the night and ask you for my child, what answer will you make to me, Edward Martin? What answer will you make to her mother, I ask you?'

The man neither spoke nor looked up.

'Answer me the question, I ask you, Edward Martin; when I say "Where is my child?" what will you give me back?'

The woman was half frantic with grief.

'Mother,' said a low sad voice at her side, 'don't talk like that to father. You know he was always too good to you, and to me and to—him. I'm not so weak as you think, and if—if the two months pass I can live with you and father here, and—and if there isn't much for me to live for my own sake, I'll try to live for yours, dear mother—for yours, dear father.'

She drew her mother gently to where her father sat, and putting an arm round the neck of each, kissed first her mother, and then her father.

The woman broke down, and leaning her head on her husband's shoulder, said piteously: 'Don't mind the wild words I said, Edward. I was mad! mad! I ask your pardon, husband.'

He rose, and for a brief moment held the two in his strong arms; then releasing them, turned away and went out of the house.

That same day John Lane walked from Killard to Clonmore, and in the evening set out from the town for Limerick.

Next day it was whispered in the village that the

engagement between Mary Martin and Lane was broken off; and in a few days such of the people of Clonmore as took an interest in the village by the sea, and knew the people, had also heard of the difference.

CHAPTER IV.

A RECORDER OF WRECKS.

THE Spirit of Tears is well known all along the southern half of the west coast of Ireland. She is of colossal proportions, and august mien. She is white, and through her transparent form the moon and stars may be seen; but when she floats between the rocky pillars of the coast she appears less vapoury. She is composed of spirit and sea-smoke. Her figure, one of youth, is clothed in a long loose robe that waves in the wind, but yet is never so fiercely blown as material garments when storms rage. Although the lineaments of her face are also those of youth, the expression betokens maturity, for it is full of inexpressible pity—and pity is no attribute of youth, but comes to the face with experience and observation of sorrow. She is never seen further inland than the edges of the cliffs; but often her white form rests on the black rocks, and her long white robe mingles with the tawny selvage of the green waters. Neither the expression of her face, nor the attitude of her figure ever alters. On the face the inexhaustible pity ever dwells, she always leans slightly forward, with her arms crossed upon her breast.

In days when history was sung, before it had come to be written down in books, she had been a princess, the most illustrious princess in all Ireland, renowned throughout the land for the beauty of her life, and the gentleness

of her character. To her father's castle came a young prince from the country, now called Spain. The young prince was noble in aspect, bold as a lion, and true as evening winds to the land. He fell in love with this peerless princess, and she loved him with a love warmer than an August sun, and purer than a May moon.

But he was compelled to go back into his own country to obtain his father's consent. He departed, appointing his return in three months. When the time for his coming back had arrived, she went down to the mouth of the river Shannon. On the day he had promised to be with her a great storm arose, and, as she kept her face towards the sea, a huge ship hove in sight. It was gilt, and covered with flags of the gayest colour. The sails were purple silk, the masts white satin wood, the cordage of the finest linen thread twisted into ropes. But all was weather-stained, and marred by tempests.

As the beautiful ship drew towards the mouth of the river, and had come so near that the princess could see her lover waving his hand to her, a great squall flew out of the wind. For an instant, the ship sprang almost into air, quivered, and then, as swiftly as a hawk striking its prey, sank beneath the waters with all on board. The princess stood motionless, and never spoke. When those around her came, they found her spirit had left her; and, in all after time, the spirit of the virgin floated over the waste of waters, and was named the Spirit of Tears.

Her form being composed of vapour, which is present always in the atmosphere, and the vapour of her figure being in contact and communication with free vapour, she is sensitive, through this communication, to everything that goes on over the sea in all the waters of the world. She, being a spirit, can see through all obstacles; and no matter how remote from where she manifests

herself, all things connected with ships are known to her. Hence the abiding expression of sorrow; for there is no time of day or night without disaster to ships. As her life on earth began and ended near the Irish shore which stems the Atlantic, she loves that shore best, and is most frequently seen there.

She is powerless for good; she has no human sympathy but pity. If she could avert evil, she would. She may never precede vessels: if she might do so, no vessel need ever venture into places of danger from which she could guide them. She may follow in the wake, never glide before the prow. She loves all things that float, but the hands of her will are tied; and her will and her impotence conflicting, work the lines of sorrow deeper into her patient face. She might leave the sea for ever to abide in brighter realms, but she will not desert the grave of her lover, nor will she shrink from giving lone seamen the satisfaction of feeling that there is one who will watch their last moments with sympathetic eyes.

She has, too, a nobler motive than either of these; she knows sailors and fishermen will try to die well when they feel her spirit is present and aware. She is the recording angel of wrecks, and will, on the Last Day deliver an account of how all seamen, since she has come to the sea, have met their fate, and worshipped as they were overwhelmed.

With regard to the Bishop's Island on the coast of the county Clare, her most important record is of a time when British soldiers were fighting against the French in Spain, and half Europe was in arms. She had seen many British ships of war sail for the Peninsula; they had carried soldiers for the war. Then a long interval elapsed, and no more vessels left England for Spain. But towards the close of one year she saw three—two

line-of-battle ships and one frigate, the latter carrying gold for the army—depart from Southampton and steer down the Channel.

No sooner had the three vessels got out of the Channel than a great storm rushed up from the south-east, and for a day the vessels laboured desperately against the terrific tyranny of the winds. When the next day dawned, the storm still raged with even greater fury. The frigate was alone, dismasted, and driving fast towards the southern coast of Ireland. She was completely at the mercy of the elements; for not only had she lost her masts, but her rudder had been carried away, her starboard guns had broken loose, and run over to the port side, doing awful havoc to the ship and crew.

All hope had quitted the frigate, and when within twenty miles of the western coast of Kerry, the captain wrote a despatch detailing the disasters, and saying that the vessel might go down any moment, as she was half-full of water, and that, at all events, she would be ashore in two hours. This despatch he placed with other documents in a cask bearing the name of the frigate, and then threw the cask overboard.

So thick was the rain, and so dark the day with clouds, it was impossible to see a mile any way. At half-past twelve, without any abatement of the gale, the wind veered round a little more to the east. The frigate rolled and wallowed, and those on board expected her to sink beneath them every moment. Now she presented her starboard side to the tempest, and over it the monstrous waves clambered, to fall in a roaring torrent across her decks. Anon, she lay with her port side to the wind, and the yellow green masses of water bounded over her decks, and flew into wavering cataracts under her lee. Again she lay before the storm, and furrowed the billows

with her shattered stem. The few survivors, lashed to posts and stanchions, were stunned by shocks and numbed with cold.

At one o'clock the wind shifted still further into the east, and the vessel took a more westerly direction. At half-past two she rounded Cape Clear, and was torn by the blasts out into the open Atlantic. She then had no crew, but Death.

From that time forward the storm moderated. At four the wind crept back once more towards the south. At five it blew due south. At six a moderate gale from the westward of south. Then it fell quickly away, almost to a dead calm, and, until midnight, an open light might have burned in the air.

Meanwhile the frigate still swam, though much deeper in the water, and with an increased list to port. The calm was succeeded by a breeze from the west, which held two days.

On the night of the second day the frigate drifted bottom up, close under the coast of county Clare. At midnight she drove stem foremost into the southern passage between the mainland and the Bishop's Island. Here, for a while, she beat heavily against the cliffs, for it was deep water, six fathom, up to the very wall of the Island.

The surf was tremendous, although the breeze was a moderate one, for the tumult raised by the storm had not yet subsided. The sound of her beating against the cliffs roused old Lane. He came out, and saw a thing which he, in the darkness at first, took for some huge sea monster. But in time, he made out what it really was. Before morning the frigate had settled down, and in two days no portion of her appeared above water; she had been battered into atoms by the surf, and her planks

and beams had either sunken where she struck, or floated away.

It was in the spring of the next year old Lane married his wife, and bought the Bishop's Island, with all rights to its hawking, hunting, fishing, mines, wood, water, and foreshore.

CHAPTER V.

LONDON.

THE sun had set on the day John Lane left Killard, before he reached Limerick. He had only a small black carpet-bag with him. He took the night-mail to Dublin, and arrived there a little after daybreak.

'Dublin,' he thought, 'is big enough for many things, but not big enough for me. If I tried to have the gold assayed here every one would know of it in no time. Few people come to Dublin with unwrought gold. If I was only in my old wilderness down south I could manage the matter much better. But London will do nearly as well. There will be no commotion there because I ask a man to tell me what this yellow metal really is. According to all accounts my father never showed any gold but coins. Can it be they were counterfeit? But there were no moulds or dies about the place, and I looked closely.'

He wandered about the city in the neighbourhood of Westland Row, and waited until the ticket office was open.

'There's no good in my taking a return ticket,' he thought. 'I cannot tell when I may be back, and I must finally arrange about this affair, and decide what is to be done before I set foot again in Killard.'

He booked for Euston, and arrived in London, worn-out and jaded, late that evening.

Although in great haste to get his business forward, he felt a still greater necessity for caution.

'I'm some judge of gold by this time, but not infallible. This Bishop's metal is redder than what I have been used to, but it feels much the same weight. If it is gold I cannot be too cautious; if it is not gold there is no use in adding the accusation of forgery to my name. Should it turn out to be real, what shall I do? But there! it is no use trying to dispose of the future in that way. Let me find out what the metal is.'

The first stage of his proceedings was simple enough. He had brought with him a few ounces of the metal. The form of those pieces was irregular, but most of them were flat, and very few had more depth than a third of their superficial diameter.

He put a few pieces in his pocket the day after his arrival, and strolled along the Strand and Fleet Street.

He entered a jeweller's, and produced a piece of the metal about the size of a sixpenny piece.

'Could you make this into a scarf-pin for me?' he asked of the man behind the counter.

The man took the piece of metal, weighed it on the end of one of his fingers, examined it through a glass, and said:

'Certainly. What pattern will you have it?'

'An anchor. But is there enough?'

'Yes; there is enough for a small head and pin. If you wish, we could add a little. Suppose we make the head of this, and the pin of some we add.'

'That will do very well, thank you. You will try to match the colour?'

'We shall match the colour exactly, so that it will seem all of one piece.'

'Do you think that a bit of good gold?'

'Yes, it seems a good piece.'

'Of course, you know gold by the look and weight.'

'Well, I ought; I've been twenty-five years passing it through my hands.'

'That's a long experience. But could you tell virgin gold from gold with an alloy?'

'I'd make a good guess where the alloy is considerable, but a small portion might escape me.'

And what do you think of that little piece?'

'There's alloy in this, beyond doubt; both silver and copper, I should think. The copper gives the red and purple sparks in the fractures, and the silver the hardness. Not much alloy. Can we do anything else for you to-day?'

'No, thank you. Good-morning.'

When he found himself in the street he began thinking once more.

'There were silver mines in Killaloo, and I've heard that gold has been discovered there too; but I do not remember ever reading, or being told, gold had been found so far West in Clare as Killard. Then what brings the copper in the gold? And most of all, what brings that enormous quantity of gold where it is? Why, in all Clare there isn't as much as there's on that one Island! Where did it come from?'

He paused a moment, staggered by the certainty which had come slowly upon him that the metal was real gold, with a slight alloy.

'All gold!' he thought, giddily, 'and all mine. Now I see why my grandfather bought the Island, and had the

clause about the "hawking, hunting, fishing, mines, wood, water, and foreshore rights" inserted. It was this gold. He found it or knew of it, and married a dumb wife that he might secure children who could not tell. If he found the gold in any ordinary way, why need he keep it secret? But I'm forgetting that there's copper in it, and that it can't be native. How did he get it? There isn't as much in all the rest of Clare. He never could have stolen it, for no one has such a vast store. Even banks, except the very largest, don't keep such sums; and until my grandfather bought the Island and went inland for a wife, I have heard he never was beyond Clonmore, in which place there was then no bank. How did he come by it? That's what I want to know.'

These were the thoughts he expressed boldly to his own mind; but under them waged a fierce struggle. Should he inquire no further, but take the gold away and sell it, and become a rich man all at once, with everything in the world he could desire; or should he hunt up some clue to this gold and act the honest part? He kept the struggle out of his view as much as possible, and endeavoured to deal with objective matters as much as possible. The strife went on all the same, stunning and shaking him, and, above all, keeping his mind away from the blue-eyed white girl of Killard. An oracular voice declared to him that the girl and the gold were inconsistencies. He could never hope she would be content to share wealth of the source of which she knew nothing, and even if he had been disposed to do such a thing he could not now deceive her as to the gross results of his two visits to Australia, for the day he and she drove home from Clonmore to Killard he had put her in possession of all facts and figures. From the period he emerged upon the great world, through the gateway of

the books read in boyhood, he had yearned to be in the midst of the motion and the tumult. He had thought that if his race had previously merely awaited death on that Island he would not follow their example, but would go into the great world and live. Putting the discovery of the last few days out of account, he was now a rich man according to the standard of his boyhood. But he was no longer a boy; he had been in the world and seen life and tasted the power of gold, and was no more than a poor man according to his present standard. He could enjoy riches—riches come suddenly upon him—as few could; for he was young, full of health, spirits, imagination. And now here was positive wealth before him. Wealth which—for goodness knew how long—had lain where it now slept; which his grandfather and father had possessed before him, and yet—because of something, some warning finger, some principle of right, some unappreciated influence of that girl whom he wished so to keep out of his mind just now—he did not like to stretch forth his hand and grasp—What? Everything, it seemed. Everything—but peace!

And so the strife went on, over and over again. He tried to quell it, but in vain. He exercised the whole force of his will to suppress it, to keep his mind fixed on the absolute business in hand; but as often as he fancied he had cast out the torment, it came back again to rack and waste him with redoubled force.

'I now know,' he thought, driving his mind into the channel of his immediate action. 'I now know that there is an alloy in the gold. Let me find out how much.'

Accordingly he sought an analytical chemist, gave him a specimen, told him what he wanted, and was requested to call in three days. He returned at the time appointed.

'I am exceedingly sorry, sir,' said the chemist, 'that I

have not been able to commence the analysis. I may tell you, however, that I have made a discovery which will simplify matters a good deal. In looking at the largest piece of metal I saw a fissure, and enlarging the fissure I found two of the pieces had been imperfectly fused, they came asunder readily, and here is the larger of the two. The specific gravity of the piece of metal corresponds with the discovery.'

John Lane took the piece in his hand and saw, a little blurred by fusion, the head of George III., and the legend 'Georgius III. Rex.' There could be no further reason to doubt. Here was the face of a guinea before him.

With a great effort he controlled himself so as to show no surprise, and having thanked the chemist, and said that this discovery answered as well, or better than an analysis, he went away, taking with him the guinea-face.

The jeweller had told him the metal was gold, and here was a guinea embedded in a partly-fused mass. It was now quite plain to him that all the metal in the Bishop's had at one time been coined gold. He remembered how there was no talk of sovereigns in connection with his father's or grandfather's mysterious money. He had heard of those fires which helped the people to the idea that his grandfather and father had had dealings with evil spirits. Now he had leaped into two secrets at once. The gold had all been guineas, or, at least, coined gold at one time; and the fires had been kindled to reduce it to its present form, with a view, no doubt, to make it appear as though it had been an ordinary native product of the Island, and had never before passed through the hands of man.

Now he knew why his father had expelled him, when he found out he could hear. He feared this secret might be discovered by him, and upon his learning to

speak, at some time before he had arrived at the age of discretion, he might tell of the gold, and so lead to a forcible withdrawal of it from the Island, where it did not rightfully lie.

Again, the fierce conflict between temptation and conscience arose, and John Lane strode through the crowded streets of London with an overwhelming secret on his mind and a distracting tumult in his breast. Towards night he became calmer, and he put the question repeatedly to himself, 'What am I to do next?'

For days he remained in a state of the greatest excitement and perplexity. He could not go back and live on the Island, watching that treasure. No portion of his scheme of life admitted of such an idea. He wanted to live until he died, not to sit down and await the falling of the shadow. He was not ignorant like his grandfather, or dumb like his father. He was in the very heyday of life, and live he would. What should he do? The gold could not be left in its present hiding-place any longer. Whatever was to be done with it, the best thing was to remove it. It brought good to no one where it lay, and might be discovered at any moment. What should he do? Remove it? Yes; that was very easy to say, but how to accomplish it? He calculated that if it were all put together it would nearly fill an ordinary corn sack; but such a sack, supposing one could be made to bear the prodigious strain, would weigh at least a ton. Yes; there was about a ton weight of the metal on that Island! How was it to be got away, and where should it be brought to?

It was not until a week had passed that he hit upon a plan. He put an advertisement in the *Shipping Gazette*, to the effect that L.J. (he thought it safer to reverse his initials) wished to hire a forty-ton yacht for the summer

months. Offers were to be sent to the Mexican Hotel, Covent Garden.

In a few days he decided upon trying one of the boats tendered. He saw the proprietor, a man who made his living by letting yachts. The 'Water Lily' was refitting for the season at Cowes. He got a description of her from the owner, and having agreed to pay a deposit of fifty pounds, insure the yacht for seven hundred pounds, and pay twenty-five guineas a month for the two months, a bargain was concluded.

Next, about a captain and a crew? Yes; but the captain and crew were to be French. Could a French captain and crew be got—say a captain, three men, and a boy—in London?

'Yes; but not quite so quickly as an English crew.

Never mind. Use all despatch; and when the boat and crew were all ready he was to be let know.

So he parted from the man, and came back west to Covent Garden once more a prey to his old struggle.

CHAPTER VI.

'GOOD-BYE FOR EVER.'

THE month of May went by and brought no solace to the heart of Mary Martin. Once the first great shock had passed away, she returned very much to her old ways. But her manner was listless, and she took little heed of what went on around her; the neighbours said she was pining away, and pointed at her faded cheek and saddened eyes in evidence of the inward havoc. The girl would sit the whole evening in the chimney-place, and never break the silence unless her father or mother addressed her; then she did not readily comprehend

what was said to her. Often, when she and her mother were alone, the woman would put her arms round her daughter, and say :

'You musn't give way like that, Mary. Try to bear up, my child. You will only fall sick if you give way like that, and then what shall I and your poor father do?'

And the girl would answer :

'I'm doing my best, mother; indeed, I'm doing my best. But it's very hard on me.'

'I know it is, my poor child.'

Sometimes the girl would give way and break into sobs, and for a while the mother would hold her to her breast, and speak such words of consolation as she could, often forgetting that the little Mary who had taught John Lane her own name, was the little girl no longer, but a woman, with a woman's sore trial hard upon her.

From the day Edward Martin had made known to Mary and his wife the decision to which he had come respecting Lane he had never once uttered his name, nor in the presence of the three had any allusion been made to the trouble. Martin was more taciturn than usual : his deep sad eyes followed his daughter about the room, when she was not looking, with an expression of sorrow and tenderness, and when he spoke to her there was a tone of protesting grief in his voice, seeming to say :

'I could do no less than I have done, Mary, and it was my duty to step between you and danger, although your heart was in my path.'

But if there was silence in the cottage, there was plenty of talk in the village. Look at what had come of flying in the face of Heaven, and having anything to do with the son of that pagan dummy! The boy had not promised very well at first, and they did not care much

for his dark and sullen ways. But when he returned from abroad, how he had improved. How gay and sociable he was; the gayest and most sociable in all the village. But, once under the influence of that awful Island, all his light-heartedness had departed; he went back suddenly to his old sullen manner, and practically broke off his engagement with the sweetest girl in all the parish, or the next parish to it.

Somehow, the anger of the people did not rest on John Lane himself. They would not have stoned him or hissed him if he had stood among them. They regarded him as a man smitten with a hideous leprosy rather than as an enemy. The curse of that Island had come upon him without any fault of his own, as far as they could see, and he was to be shunned, not feared; pitied, not execrated. They had, at the first, prophesied evil would follow the boy. Although for years they had forgotten their old foreshadowings, they now remembered them in more than their original vigour.

Mary had heard her father talk of the fight in the public-house the day of John Lane's return, and how Cahill had got a month's imprisonment for his conduct.

When asked by the magistrate the reason of his unprovoked attack on the man, he had said he supposed he was drunk, but gave no further explanation; and, this being deemed far from satisfactory, he had been sent to gaol.

When the girl learned the particulars of the fight, and the place and time at which it took place, she had half guessed that John's arrival had something to do with Cahill's unaccountable violence. She was deeply touched —deeply sorry for this man. Now she could, in a way, understand more accurately what his feelings must be; for, although they were far removed from hers, there

stretched a connecting cord that brought her more into sympathy with him. He cared for her, no doubt, in somewhat the same way as she cared for John, and he had seen a man come between him and her, and his frenzy had burst out in wild, irrational resentment. He was a man, and anger naturally took the form of violence. She loved John with all her heart and soul, and a shadow which no one could exactly define or explain had come between them. It seemed as though she should never look upon him again; never hear his voice or feel the pressure of his arm.

Oh! what had happened to John to change him so? He had gone off as though he cared to see her no more; he had sent no message to her by her father. What had driven him away, after all his promises? What her father asked him to do may have been hard, but would not she have leaped from the Bishop's into the sea if it could save John from great sorrow—and what sorrow could be greater than was now upon her?

What was he doing now? Could it be he had already begun to forget her? Perhaps she had disappointed him on his second return. He may have thought her beauty less, or, after the fine world through which he had been going, perhaps her manners had seemed rude or harsh. Forgetting her! Could John be forgetting her, after all he had said, all he had written? Now he was rich, and might go where he chose. He knew much more than she ever dreamed of; was fit for society in which she should be laughed at. She knew she was only a fisherman's daughter, but she had read books, and talked with poor old Mr. Heywood and John, and had picked up some notion of what people above her were like, and felt that in time, if she, too, had gone away like John, she might be somewhat—a great way off—but somewhat able

to avoid disgracing him as his wife. How she had planned in her heart to try and be ever so little worthy of him! And now all seemed gone.

A month passed and they had heard no tidings of him. He had not been seen in the neighbourhood since that black day her father stood over her and told her the sickening thing. Would the second month go by as the first? And, merciful heavens! should she never see him again?

One morning, early in June, Edward Martin came in with an expression of excitement on his face, usually so calm.

'There's a smack at anchor under the Bishop's, and two of the crew have been ashore on the beach of Killard for fresh water, and neither of them could talk English or Irish, only gibberish. They say, down in Killard, that John Lane is in the smack,' said the fisherman, all in one breath.

Mrs. Martin listened with open mouth and eyes.

Mary turned pale and cold.

The man continued:

'The smack anchored in the night, and they say that John Lane came in the boat and showed the men where the spring is in the rocks, but did not land himself on the beach; and they say the Fool is gone inland to Clonmore.'

That day passed, and John Lane, who had been seen on the Island, never came near the village.

Mary sat indoors, wearing her heart away with grief. Would he make no attempt to see her? Would he not even send a message? What was the meaning of these men, who could not speak to the people? Was there really something, after all, in that talk about a curse? His father had married a dumb wife, and now the son

was found in company with men who could not speak to the honest people of the village. There did appear to be some connection between these two facts; and—withering thought!—could it be that John had already determined to meet her no more, and to put in her place one afflicted as his grandmother and mother had been? Oh! if that was so, why was not she mercifully so afflicted?

At night Edward Martin had more news, for the people of the village were watching the Island. John Lane was lowering into the smack all the furniture of his father's hut, and bags of ballast. He had been so engaged all day.

Next morning the smack was gone, and John Lane too, for no smoke rose from the chimney. There appeared no trace of anyone on the Island.

Come and gone, and no message to her! Not even landed on the mainland where she was. Ah, now all was too, too plain! There was a curse, and it had fallen upon her John, and her John had left Killard and her. If ever he returned it would be secretly to the Island; if ever he married, it would be a dumb bride. All was over. Life was done, but the way to death seemed very long and infinitely dreary.

It was a thousand times worse than if he had never come back, for fears, which had haunted her only as shadows before, now hardened into chill, cold realities, and stood for ever conspicuous before her aching eyes.

What use in counting the days until the second month should expire? And yet she did—nine, five, hree, one. Gone! gone! Gone by! The two months gone by, and he had made no sign! All now was at an end. Would not merciful death come and take her away; take

her away from memory, and the pity in the eyes of those around her?

She seldom or never went down to the village now. She could not bear to meet the people. Their avoidance of his name stung her more than anything else, and she kept in the house, or wandered forlorn on the upland downs through the warm summer sunlight.

Her favourite seat was in the depression in the cliff; the spot he had loved as a boy, the spot where she had first seen him as a man. Here she cared most to be, watching the long polished surface of the swells as they crept silently towards the hidden bases of the cliffs. She remained whole hours in this nook, living over the past, and, for a time, persuading her heart that no change had arisen; that John was still to return some day—perhaps as he had on that morning when she looked up and discovered a strange, brown-bearded man, and found the stranger to be John Lane.

One day, towards the close of July, she was in her favourite seat. The larks were singing aloft, and the deep breathing of the ocean on the shore rose up in a dull, solemn monotone.

Suddenly a shadow fell on her, and, looking up with a start, she discovered a low-sized, thick-set man gazing intently at her from the edge of the hollow.

She uttered a faint cry, for at the moment she had been rehearsing to her heart the memorable day, years ago, when she and John had stood face to face, neither recognising the other.

'Good-morning, Mary! It's a long day since I saw you now. I've been in trouble over a row. I suppose you heard of it?'

He sat down on the edge of the slope a few yards off.

'Yes, Christie Cahill; I heard of the fight, and I was sorry for you.'

'I did not come to Killard this long time, because I knew the disgrace of that fight would be too fresh before me. But I thought I'd come over to-day. I don't feel well, and I thought the sea might do me good.'

'I am sorry you are not well, and I hope the sea will serve you; it does good to some people.'

'Ay, some people. But it doesn't seem to be doing you much good. You are looking like a ghost, Mary.'

'I'm very well. It's only my colour that's a little gone; maybe the hot weather is doing it.'

'Mary, I know very well where your colour is going; it's going away with your thoughts. But what good will fretting do? It's all over now, Mary—that old thing—but you're young yet, and more like an angel than ever, and any man in Killard or Clonmore would be proud of you.'

'I'd rather you wouldn't speak that way.'

'Why not? It's the truth, and you ought not to be afraid of the truth, especially when it's a pleasant truth.'

'Pleasant; pleasant! If it was true it would make things worse.'

'Why?'

'Oh, I don't know. Don't ask me. I'd rather you didn't talk this way.'

'Well, then, may I talk to you another way?'

'Any way but that.'

'May I?'

He sprang to his feet, and was close by her side in a moment. He seized both her hands in his, and cried:

'Mary, Mary, will you listen to me at last? Now the old thing is all over, and you are free——'

'Let me go! Let me go at once, sir! Do you hear?

I did not mean that you might say such things to me. Let me go at once, sir. I am not free, and I never can be free, no matter what happens.'

She had broken from him, and stood pale and panting with excitement.

'Mary—'

'Go away, and never speak to me of this again. I pity you, for now I know what it is to feel hopeless; but my state is no more hopeless than yours. I was his, and I will be his; no other man's, until I die. He may put someone else in my place, but I will never think of anyone but him until I die, and that can't be far off.'

'Won't you listen to me for one moment. Here, on my knees——'

'Get up; get up! Why should you kneel to me? Ask for strength to bear your cross—I ask strength for mine—and in time you may get it. That's right, get up.'

'If you speak the word, I'll go over the cliff, and never see you again.'

'Don't say such sinful things. Go to your home in Clonmore, and try to forget all this. Don't come near me again until you have forgotten you ever spoke to me as you did now.'

'That can never be.'

'Then we must never meet again. I am all the same as John Lane's wife. I feel just as if the words had been spoken over us. If he puts another in my place I'll be John Lane's widow in my own mind, for he will be dead to me.'

'And I am never to see you again?'

'Never, until you forget.'

'Then, Mary Martin, good-bye for ever, and may you never know as bad a day as this is to Christie Cahill.'

'Good-bye, and I pray you may find comfort.'

'I'll leave Clonmore and go to America.'

'That may be best for you, and now good-bye.'

She held out her hand to him. He took it, and stooping over it, kissed it, without a word; turned round and walked rapidly away, with his head down, his hands clenched, and his white teeth set.

CHAPTER VII.

CONCLUSION.

A WEEK passed without bringing any event to stir the people in the cottage on the southern slope of the downs. One morning, when the three were at breakfast, a man knocked and entered.

'I come from Clonmore,' he said, 'with this letter. It was sent to Mr. Cassidy of the Clonmore Arms, with orders to have it forwarded at once, by car, to Killard. It's for Edward Martin, and the people told me he lives here.'

'That's my name,' said Edward Martin in surprise.

'I must be going now,' the man added, 'I have only to give it to you. The car is paid for.'

With these words the man withdrew, leaving the letter in the hand of the perplexed fisherman.

'Mary,' he said, turning to his daughter, and holding out the letter to her, 'open it, and let me know what's in it. I am not expecting a letter from anyone.'

As she took it she uttered a cry, half joyful, half fearful. 'It's from John, father! and it comes from London.

'From John Lane in London!' He frowned. 'What can he have to say to me that he must write. He knows

my mind as plain as words can show it. Open it anyway and let me hear what's in it.'

With trembling hands and flushed face the girl broke the envelope. At first her eyes refused to see, they were full of tears. When her sight became clear this is what she read, in a faltering voice, often interrupted by her own feelings, by ejaculations and by questions:—

'LONDON, 17*th July*.

'MY DEAR EDWARD MARTIN,

'When I saw you last you said to me I was never again to cross your threshold until I told you the reason of the change in my plans, and I never will. This letter will put all before you. To begin at the beginning:—

'When I went to the Bishop's Island, the day after I got to Killard, the Fool put a paper into one of my hands and a dried mackerel doubled up in the other, and made me stand with my feet to a particular spot. He told me my father had directed him to do so, and then to go away. I looked at the paper and saw two drawings on it, one a sketch of the Bishop's Island, or, to be nearer the mark, a thing I knew was intended for the Bishop's, with a square for the hut, and under the square a blot. The other side had a thing I cannot very well describe, but can show you.

'Well, as you may think, I made up my mind that this paper, and the way I was made to stand, had something of consequence in it. There were things like fish on the side of the paper that was not a drawing of the Island itself, and there was a fish in my hand. I looked at the two sides very closely, and I looked around the room as well. I could not make out what the blot under the hut was intended for. That was the only thing on this side

of the paper I could not understand. I was all in the dark about the other side.

'Not to make my story too long, I thought that maybe there was something in the wall. I tried, and found nothing. Then, remembering that I was in front of the fireplace, I looked up the chimney and in the end got up a little way. Here I found a piece of wood, cut by myself long ago into the form of a fish. I now felt all was right so far, and could understand the drawing and the fish in my hand. The wooden fish pointed up the chimney.

'I took a candle and climbed to the place where the flue bends, and saw there another fish, not pointing up, but in a bend down another flue—the flue of what used to be my room as I thought.

'I turned and went down this, meeting another wooden fish on my way, and found myself not in my old room, but in a kind of small cave dug out of the Island, and maybe used by the Bishop to hide in.

'The floor of the cave was sand, and in one corner was a fourth wooden fish stuck into the sand head foremost. I dug with my hands, and there, Edward Martin, lay the secret! An immense quantity of gold, in small canvas bags. It was all in lumps.

'As you may fancy, I was astonished beyond everything, and for a while I felt as if the air of the place was choking me.

'Without my wishing it, all at once a great temptation came to me, and I thought if I could only get the gold away I'd be happy. Now you can see the reason for the way I was in after I came off the Bishop's.

'Well, I started for London, and here I made it plain to myself that the gold had not been rightly belonging to

the Island or me; but I could not get rid of the temptation to keep it, do all I might. I hired a yacht and a French crew, so that they could tell nothing at Killard, and little in London. I carried the gold and the temptation with me here. The night I arrived something struck me, and Heaven sent me thoughts of you, Edward Martin, and all you had done for me when I was a speechless outcast on the world and knew nobody; and I thought of the girl I loved, and of your good wife, till my conscience came back and I resolved to give up the gold; and now I have done so, and it will go to the Government, for they can find no tale or tidings of how it came to be on the Island, or who owned it. But I am to get a fortune out of it for giving it up. The only way the Government can account for the gold is that a treasure-ship was lost long ago many miles south of Killard.

'And now, Edward Martin, you know all, and I humbly ask your pardon for not telling you at first, and I ask Mary's pardon too. When you get this I shall be close to Clonmore, and in the evening I hope to be in Killard. If you and Mary will only try to forgive me I'll be the happiest man alive. I have fought the Curse and I have won.

'I write this to you that you may know all before I see you, and that, if you forgive me, you may be ready to let me cross your threshold as I have done a thousand times with a heart full of thankfulness to you and your good wife. I'll take it as a sign I am forgiven, if Mary is on the edge of the downs, near Killard. Until I see her, if I may, I'll say nothing more.

'Your dutiful

'JOHN LANE.

That evening a young girl with a face a little pale, but full of happiness, waited on the edge of the downs near Killard. She waited long, but at length, across the broad green level of the upland plain, she saw a car approaching. Gradually it became more distinct. At length she could make out a brown-bearded man standing up, waving his hat. The driver urged the horse forward, the brown-bearded man shouted, and, in a little time, the girl rested sobbing in the man's arms.

After a while he said to her, 'Mary, the Curse ha gone for ever from the Lanes, and a blessing has come instead; and you, darling, are the blessing! Is your mother well?'

THE END.

Stirling, October 1885.
" " & October 1947

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